



**Executive Board**

**Tuesday, 25 February 2025 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**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Page No</b>
<b>1. MINUTES</b>	<b>1 - 10</b>
<b>2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST</b>	
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.	
<b>3. LEADER'S PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>(A) CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2025/26</b>	<b>11 - 13</b>
<b>(B) URGENT DECISIONS</b>	<b>14 - 15</b>

*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, 13 March 2025*

Item	Page No
<b>4. CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>(A) BUDGET 2025/26</b>	<b>16 - 53</b>
<b>(B) TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2025/26</b>	<b>54 - 79</b>
<b>(C) CAPITAL STRATEGY 2025/26</b>	<b>80 - 94</b>
<b>(D) DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF RENEWALS</b>	<b>95 - 102</b>
<b>5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>(A) PERMISSION TO CONSULT- HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS &amp; DISABILITIES - KEY DECISION</b>	<b>103 - 133</b>
<b>6. ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>(A) SUPPORT AT HOME SERVICE IN HALTON – BRITISH RED CROSS</b>	<b>134 - 148</b>
<b>7. ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>(A) HALTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS)</b>	<b>149 - 171</b>
<b>8. SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985</b>	
<b>PART II</b>	
<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 <b>RECOMMENDED</b> 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>	
<b>9. DEPUTY LEADER'S PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>(A) RUNCORN CREATIVE AND DIGITAL SKILLS CENTRE</b>	<b>172 - 176</b>

<b>Item</b>	<b>Page No</b>
<b>(B) HALTON STADIUM MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME</b>	<b>177 - 181</b>
<b>10. ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>(A) COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER FOR LAND AT SCI-TECH DARES BURY - KEY DECISION</b>	<b>182 - 198</b>
<b>(B) FOUNDRY LANE RESIDENTIAL</b>	<b>199 - 205</b>

***In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.***

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

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

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

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, S. Young, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson, W. Rourke and D. Nolan

Also in attendance: None

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

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

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

RESOLVED: That

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

Director of  
Finance

## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO**

### **EXB72 SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2026/27 - KEY DECISION**

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

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

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

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

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

#### Reason(s) for Decision

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

#### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

#### Implementation Date

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

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

Executive Director  
of Children's  
Services

#### EXB73 CAPITAL PROGRAMME – 2025/26 - KEY DECISION

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

within schools for 2025/26.

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

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

Reason(s) for Decision

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

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Implementation Date

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

RESOLVED: That

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

Executive Director  
of Children's  
Services

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO**

EXB74 FEE SETTING PROCESS AND REQUEST TO CONSULT CARE PROVIDERS

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

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

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

RESOLVED: That

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

Executive Director  
of Adult Services

#### EXB75 ADULT SOCIAL CARE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

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

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

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

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

#### EXB76 WELLBEING & ENGAGEMENT SERVICES IN HALTON

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



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

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

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

Executive Director  
of Adult Services

## **ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO**

### **EXB77 WASTE MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

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

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

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

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

approval was sought to purchase the vehicles and caddies.

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

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

RESOLVED: That the Board

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

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

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

**EXB78 SPORTS FACILITY FEES AND CHARGES**

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

proposal to increase the eligibility age for Halton Leisure Card from 60 years to 65 years.

RESOLVED: That

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

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

EXB79 VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING - GRANT ALLOCATIONS 2024/25

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

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

Executive Director  
of Adult Services

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

The Board considered:

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

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

### **ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO**

#### **EXB81 FULL COST CLIENTS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE - KEY DECISION**

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

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

#### Reason(s) for Decision

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

#### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

N/A

#### Implementation Date

1 April 2025.

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

Executive Director  
of Adult Services

**MINUTES ISSUED: 22 January 2025**

**CALL-IN: 29 January 2025 at 5.00 pm.**

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

*Meeting ended at 3.08 p.m.*

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Executive Board
<b>DATE:</b>	25 February 2025
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Chief Executive
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Leader's
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Calendar of Meetings – 2025/26
<b>WARDS:</b>	Borough wide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To approve the Calendar of Meetings for the 2025/26 Municipal Year attached at Appendix 1 (NB light hatched areas indicate weekends and Bank Holidays, dark hatched areas indicate school holidays).

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Council be recommended to approve the Calendar of Meetings for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider and recommend approval of the calendar of meetings for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None.

### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

None.

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

#### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

None.

#### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

None.

#### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

None.

#### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

None.

#### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

Should a Calendar of Meetings not be approved, there will be a delay in publishing meeting dates. This would result in practical difficulties in respect of the necessary arrangements required and the planning process regarding agenda/report timetables.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

Once a Calendar of Meetings has been approved the dates will be published, hence assisting public involvement in the democratic process.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.

**NB** Lightly shaded areas indicate weekends and Bank Holidays; dark shaded areas indicate school holidays.

	MAY 2025	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN 2026	FEB	MARCH	APR	MAY
M		2 Dev Manage Com						1			2		
T		3 Corporate PPB	1 SEMINAR					2 Dev Manage Com			3 Dev Manage Com		
W		4	2 Regulatory			1		3 COUNCIL			4 COUNCIL	1	
T	1	5	3			2		4	1 New Year Bank Holiday		5	2	
F	2	6	4	1		3		5	2		6	3 Bank Holiday	1
S	3	7	5	2		4	1	6	3		7	4	2
S	4	8	6	3		5	2	7	4	1	8	5	3
M	5 Early May Bank Holiday	9 CYP&F PPB	7	4 Dev Manage Com	1 Dev Manage Com	6 Dev Manage Com	3 Dev Manage Com	8	5 Dev Manage Com	2 Dev Manage Com	9	6 Bank Holiday	4 Early May Bank Holiday
T	6 Dev Manage Com	10 Safer PPB	8 Dev Manage Com	5 SEMINAR	2 Corporate PPB	7	4 Corporate PPB	9	6	3 Safer PPB	10 Seminar	7 Dev Manage Com	5 Dev Manage Com
W	7	11 Schools Forum	9 HWB Board COUNCIL	6	3 SEMINAR	8 HWB Board Regulatory	5	10	7 Regulatory	4 Mayoral Committee	11 HWB Board Regulatory	8	6
T	8	12 Executive Board	10 Executive Board	7	4	9 SEMINAR	6	11 Executive Board	8	5	12 Executive Board	9	7 Local Elections
F	9	13	11	8	5	10	7	12	9	6	13	10	8
S	10	14	12	9	6	11	8	13	10	7	14	11	9
S	11	15	13	10	7	12	9	14	11	8	15	12	10
M	12	16 ELS&C PPB	14	11	8 CYP&F PPB	13	10 CYP&F PPB	15	12	9	16	13	11
T	13 Exec Board Selection Com	17	15	12	9	14	11	16	13	10 Health PPB	17	14	12 Exec Board Select Com (prov)
W	14	18 Environment PPB	16	13	10 Environment PPB	15 Schools Forum	12 Environment PPB	17	14 HWB Board	11 Environment PPB	18 A&G Board	15	13
T	15	19	17	14	11 Executive Board	16	13 Executive Board	18	15 Executive Board	12 Executive Board	19	16 Executive Board	14
F	16 ANNUAL COUNCIL	20	18	15	12	17	14	19	16	13	20	17	15 ANNUAL COUNCIL (prov)
S	17	21	19	16	13	18	15	20	17	14	21	18	16
S	18	22	20	17	14	19	16	21	18	15	22	19	17
M	19	23	21	18	15 ELS&C PPB	20	17 ELS&C PPB	22	19 CYP&F PPB	16	23	20	18
T	20	24 Health PPB	22	19	16 Safer PPB	21	18 Safer PPB	23	20 Corporate PPB	17	24	21	19
W	21	25 A&G Board	23	20	17	22 COUNCIL	19 A&G Board	24	21 Schools Forum	18	25	22	20
T	22	26	24	21	18	23 Executive Board	20	25 Xmas Day	22	19	26	23	21
F	23	27	25	22	19	24	21	26 Box Day	23	20	27	24	22
S	24	28	26	23	20	25	22	27	24	21	28	25	23
S	25	29	27	24	21	26	23	28	25	22	29	26	24
M	26	30	28	25 Bank Holiday	22	27	24	29	26 ELS&C PPB	23	30	27	25 Bank Holiday
T	27		29	26	23 Health PPB	28	25 Health PPB	30	27	24	31	28	26
W	28		30	27	24 A&G Board	29	26 Regulatory	31	28	25 Schools Forum		29	27
T	29		31	28	25	30	27		29	26		30	28
F	30			29	26	31	28		30	27			29
S	31			30	27		29		31	28			30
S				31	28		30						31



<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Executive Board
<b>DATE:</b>	25 February 2025
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Chief Executive
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Leader
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Urgent Decisions
<b>WARDS:</b>	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 Operational Director – Finance and/or Operational 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:

<b>Date Decision taken</b>	<b>Decision details</b>
10 December 2025	Waiver for appointment of the Transformation Programme Lead for the Family Hub
10 January 2025	Taxi Matter

### 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

**6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

None.

**6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

None.

**6.3 A Healthy Halton**

None.

**6.4 A Safer Halton**

None.

**6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

**7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

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:** 25 February 2025  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Director of Finance  
**PORTFOLIO:** Corporate Services  
**SUBJECT:** Budget 2025/26  
**WARD(S):** Borough-wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To recommend to Council the revenue budget, capital programme and council tax for 2025/26.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Council be recommended;**

- (i) To adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A, which includes setting the budget at £183.052m, the Council Tax requirement of £68.208m (before Parish, Police, Fire and LCR Combined Authority precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,846.66;**
- (ii) To approve the capital programme set out in Appendix E;**
- (iii) To approve the Use of Capital Receipts Strategy set out in Appendix H;**
- (iv) To approve the budget savings set out in Appendix G;**
- (v) To approve 100% Council Tax premium being applied to properties which have been unoccupied and unfurnished for a minimum period of 12 months.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **3.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy**

3.1.1 The Board approved the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) at its meeting on 14 November 2024. In summary, funding gaps of £38.1m in 2025/26, £14.5m in 2026/27, £7.3m in 2027/28, and £9.3m in 2028/29 were identified. The Strategy had the following objectives:

- Deliver a balanced and sustainable budget
- Prioritise spending towards the Council's priority areas
- Avoid excessive Council Tax rises

- Achieve significant cashable efficiency gains
- Protect essential front-line services and vulnerable members of the community
- Deliver improved procurement

### **3.2 Budget Consultation**

3.2.1 The Council uses various consultation methods to listen to the views of the public and Members' own experience through their ward work is an important part of that process.

3.2.2 Individual consultations are taking place in respect of specific budget proposals and equality impact assessments will be completed where necessary.

### **3.3 Review of the 2024/25 Budget**

3.3.1 The Executive Board receives regular reports detailing spending in the current year against the budget. The latest report indicates that spending is forecast to be over budget in the current year by approximately £20.757m against a net budget of £149.496m. The most significant budget pressure for the Council continue to be Children's Social Care costs, in particular residential care costs. Overall costs are being controlled where possible, and income being maximised, as well as making use of all available grant funding.

3.3.2 Given the scale of the financial challenges facing the Council, over the past year monitoring reports have been issued every other month to the Council's Senior Management Team and Executive Board. They present up to date information of the in-year financial position to enable urgent action to be taken wherever possible. Monthly financial focus groups are also held monthly with Executive Directors in order for decisions to be considered to mitigate the impact of the financial pressures and bring net spending back in line with the budget as far as possible.

3.3.3 The level of reserves held by the Council is also reviewed every other month and reported to Executive Board. The level of useable reserves is not sufficient to cover the scale of the Council's overspend position for the current year.

### **3.4 2025/26 Revenue Budget**

3.4.1 The proposed revenue budget totals £183.052m. The departmental analysis of the budget is shown in Appendix B, along with a breakdown of these changes in Appendix C. The departmental budgets provided at the time of writing this report are subject to change pending any further alterations to funding and the recalculation of the Council's internal recharges.

- 3.4.2 The net budget is calculated as per Table A, taking into account the level of growth, savings, grant allocations, and collection fund estimated for 2025/26.

**Table A – Net Budget Calculation**

	<b>2025/26 Base Budget Position (£m)</b>
2024/25 Approved Revenue Budget	149.496
Less Increase in Government Grants as per Provisional Settlement (see Table B)	-11.827
Less Increase in Other Grants Outside Settlement	-0.939
Plus Increase in Net Costs (See Table C)	54.547
Less Agreed and Proposed Savings (see Appendices F and G)	-8.225
<b>2025/26 Proposed Budget</b>	<b>183.052</b>

### **3.5 Budget Savings Proposals**

- 3.5.1 A total of £1.349m of savings to be achieved in 2025/26 were previously approved by Council on 01 February 2023. These savings are detailed in Appendix F.
- 3.5.2 Further savings of £6.876m have been proposed for the 2025/26 financial year and are detailed in Appendix G.

### **3.6 Funding of the 2025/26 Net Budget**

- 3.6.1 Funding of the net budget traditionally comes from council tax and business rates, including top-up grant from Government.
- 3.6.2 Table B shows the forecast level of council tax and business rates for the next year and highlights the deficit between this and the proposed budget need for next year.

**Table B – Funding of 2025/26 Budget**

	<b>2025/26 Base Budget Position (£m)</b>
2025/26 Proposed Budget (Table A)	183.052
Funded by:	
2025/26 Council Tax Requirement (see Table G)	-68.208
2025/26 Forecast Income from Business Rates (see Table G)	-85.459
<b>2025/26 Budget Deficit - To be Funded from Exceptional Financial Support</b>	<b>29.385</b>

### **3.7 Exceptional Financial Support**

- 3.7.1 Table B above demonstrates the Council is in a position where it is unable to present a balanced 2025/26 budget without seeking Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) from Government. Receipts from Council Tax and Business Rates are insufficient to fund the forecast net spend for 2025/26.
- 3.7.2 The Government's EFS arrangement provides councils in financial difficulty with exceptional permission to capitalise annual revenue costs and then fund them from long term borrowing (usually over 25 years) from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB). EFS provides permission to borrow and does not provide grant funding.
- 3.7.3 The Council's request for EFS seeks support from Government to provide alternative arrangements that would allow the Council to close the budget gap and set a balanced budget.
- 3.7.4 A capitalisation direction is a last resort for the Council to balance the 2025/26 budget. Government will only provide capitalisation support one year at a time. It is imperative the Council seeks to set out how it will aim to balance the budget in future without the need for ongoing capitalisation support. This can only be done through growing income receipts or looking to rationalise current levels of expenditure.
- 3.7.5 Table B forecasts the Council will have to borrow £29.385m in 2025/26 to provide a balanced budget. Without a credible savings plan being implemented over the next year, the unfunded deficit will roll forward to 2026/27.
- 3.7.6 On 04 December 2024, Council approved that an application for EFS be made to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The application was initially submitted on 13 December with an amended submission made post publication of the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement. The submission includes an ask for EFS for 2024/25 of £20.8m and for 2025/26 of £32m. These values are higher than the budget gaps identified within the report as they provide an element of contingency. The actual level of support required will be determined by the final deficit position.

3.7.7 Provisional approval of the Council's EFS application is still awaited from Government at the time of preparing this report, but is expected to be received in late February 2025.

### 3.8 2025/26 Local Government Grant Funding

3.8.1 The proposed budget incorporates the grant figures announced in the Local Government Finance Settlement. The provisional settlement was published on 18 December 2024 with the Final Settlement published on 03 February 2025.

3.8.2 Table C provides an updated position of grants announced at the settlement and how the allocation compares to 2024/25.

**Table C – 2025/26 Grant Allocations**

<b>Funding</b>	<b>2024/25 Grant Funding (£m)</b>	<b>2025/26 Final Settlement (£m)</b>	<b>2025/26 Change in Funding (£m)</b>
<b>Funding Budgeted Spend</b>			
Services Grant	0.252	0.000	-0.252
Recovery Grant	0.000	4.487	4.487
New Homes Bonus	0.124	0.181	0.057
National Insurance Contributions Compensation	0.000	1.604	1.604
Extended Producer Responsibility	0.000	3.134	3.134
Social Care Grant	15.026	17.744	2.718
Children's Social Care Prevention Grant	0.000	1.410	1.410
Children and Families Grant	1.404	1.404	0.000
Adult Social Care Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund	2.796	2.796	0.000
Adult Social Care Discharge Fund	1.631	0.000	-1.631
<b>Ringfenced Grants</b>			
Homelessness Prevention Grant	0.471	0.548	0.077
Rough Sleeping Prevention Grant	0.000	0.139	0.139
Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant	0.341	0.425	0.084
<b>Total Government Grants</b>	<b>22.045</b>	<b>33.872</b>	<b>11.827</b>

3.8.3 Government Grants include £0.181m for the New Homes Bonus grant, an increase of £0.057m from 2024/25. New Homes Bonus allocations are now received for one year only, with no legacy payments available. Government have stated that 2025/26 will be the final year of New Homes Bonus payments. It has not been confirmed whether a new scheme aimed at rewarding housing growth will be implemented, or whether the funding will be redistributed elsewhere within the Settlement.

- 3.8.4 The budget includes Local Authority Better Care Grant (previously known as the Improved Better Care Fund) of £8.614m. This allocation includes £1.631m which was previously received separately as the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund. No inflationary increase has been provided for 2025/26. The Local Authority Better Care Grant is funded through retained business rates rather than received as a separate cash allocation.
- 3.8.5 Additional funding for Adult's and Children's Social Care was announced as part of the provisional grant settlement. The 2025/26 grant allocation of £17.744m is inclusive of an additional allocation of £2.718m awarded for the forthcoming year. This funding will be included in the Council budget to help to fund existing pressures within Social Care services.
- 3.8.6 £2.796m will be received in 2025/26 from the Adult Social Care Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund. There has been no change to this allocation from 2024/25. In previous years, this has been used to help fund increases in rates paid to social care providers. Given that there is no uplift to the allocation, it cannot be used to fund increases specifically for 2025/26.
- 3.8.7 The Children's Social Care Prevention Grant is new funding, worth £270m nationally. The grant has been distributed according to a new Children's Services needs-based formula and is worth £1.410m to Halton in 2025/26. It is intended that this grant will be used to fund early intervention and preventative services. Work is currently being undertaken to determine whether any of the additional spend proposed as part of the Children's Improvement Programme meets the funding criteria for this grant. Pending the completion of this work, £1.410m has been included within the Council's contingency budget to allow for any additional spending requirements.
- 3.8.8 A number of existing grants funded by the Department for Education have been consolidated into a Children and Families Grant, consisting of:
- Supporting Families
  - Supported Accommodation Reforms – New Burdens
  - Staying Put
  - Virtual Heads Extension for Previously Looked After Children
  - Leaving Care Allowance
  - Personal Advisors

The allocations for these grants have remained at their 2024/25 levels, although the payment by result conditions for the Supporting Families Grant has been ended, meaning that the full allocation is guaranteed for next year. This funding stream is outside of core spending power in 2025/26, but it is intended that this will be rolled in with the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant in 2026/27.



- 3.8.9 The non-ringfenced Services Grant, worth £0.252m to Halton in 2024/25, has been discontinued for 2025/26.
- 3.8.10 The Recovery Grant is a new, non-ringfenced, one-off grant worth £600m nationally, introduced for 2025/26. This funding is targeted at local authorities with high levels of need and demand for services and less ability to raise income through council tax. Halton has received a grant allocation of £4.487m for 2025/26.
- 3.8.11 Halton's allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant and Rough Sleeping Prevention Grant has increased by £0.077m and £0.139m respectively, and there has been an increase to the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant of £0.084m for 2025/26. These three funding streams are ringfenced, therefore the increase in funding is not available to support existing spending pressures.
- 3.8.12 At the provisional settlement, it was announced that £515m of funding will be distributed to local authorities to compensate for the direct impact of increases to employer National Insurance Contributions. Allocations were published as part of the final settlement, with Halton receiving £1.604m in 2025/26. It is anticipated that this will not be sufficient to fund the increase in direct staffing costs that are incurred through the increase in National Insurance Contributions. No compensation has been provided for increases in provider costs to the Council, which is likely to significantly impact on the cost of Adult Social Care contracts, and on agency staffing rates.
- 3.8.13 2025/26 will be the first year that local authorities will receive funding through the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme. This funding is intended to cover the net efficient costs associated with collection and disposal of household packaging waste from kerbside and communal collections, and from waste deposited at Household Waste and Recycling Centres. This grant is distributed by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and is ultimately funded by a tax levied on the producers of packaging. Halton's estimated allocation for 2025/26 is £3.134m. Future year allocations are dependent on the collection of producer fees and will be subject to change, but for 2025/26 only, Government have guaranteed that authorities will receive at least their provisional allocation. £0.5m of additional expenditure has been included within the budget to fund preparatory work ahead of the changes to recycling legislation in 2026/27, with the remainder of the grant being used to fund existing recycling collection and disposal costs.
- 3.8.14 Government have confirmed the continuation of the 100% Business Rates Retention pilot within the Liverpool City Region for 2025/26. The pilot comes with a no detriment guarantee from Government that no authority will be worse off than had they not been in the pilot.

### 3.9 Estimated Price Increases

3.9.1 Since the MTFs was published in November 2024, the 2025/26 base budget position has been reviewed in detail. This included reviewing assumptions included within the MTFs and updating these within the base budget. Table D provides further information of the level of growth required to bring the budget to a position which funds existing services, inflation increases and service demand.

**Table D – Estimated Price Increases**

	<b>Budget Position (£m)</b>
<b>General Spend Increase</b>	
Salary Inflation and Increments	5.870
Price Inflation	5.033
Income Inflation	-0.853
Capital Programme	1.094
Other Known Additional Costs	3.455
Previously Approved Savings Unachieved	5.217
<b>Adult Social Care Additional Budget Increase</b>	
2024/25 Overspend – Adult Social Care	2.433
Social Care National Insurance Provider Uplift	1.770
Service Demand Pressures – Adult Social Care	2.382
<b>Children’s Directorate Additional Budget Increase</b>	
2024/25 Overspend – Children’s Services	11.300
2024/25 Overspend – Home to School Transport	0.294
Service Demand Pressures – Children’s Social Care	1.218
Service Demand Pressures – Home to School Transport	0.350
Children’s Improvement Funding	4.802
SEN Assessments and Psychology Services	0.997
<b>Environment &amp; Regeneration Additional Budget Increase</b>	
Contingency – Extended Producer Responsibility	0.500
<b>Corporate &amp; Democracy Additional Budget Increase</b>	
Treasury Management	4.124
Contingency	4.561
<b>Total Increase in Costs</b>	<b>54.547</b>

3.9.2 Local Government pay rates for 2025/26 have not yet been agreed. A 2% rise on all pay bands has been assumed in the budget for 2025/26, alongside the additional costs arising from the changes in National Insurance.

3.9.3 Inflation of 1.7% has been applied to contractual (non-controllable) expenditure budgets for 2025/26. Additional inflation of 6.4% has been applied to social care contract costs which will increase at above normal inflation rates due to the increase of 6.7% in National Living

Wage rates from April 2025. Further inflation of 3.22% has been applied to Adult Social Care contract costs to reflect the increase in Employers' National Insurance costs. Electricity and gas budgets have been reduced by 15% and 20% respectively due to a forecast decrease in energy costs, whilst water budgets have been increased by 23%.

- 3.9.4 The risk to the Council's budget continues over the next year due to historical service demand pressures. To mitigate this risk, budgets have been increased in 2025/26 to reflect the current departmental budget overspends. These increases are based on the 2024/25 full-year expenditure projections. This should provide realistic, sustainable departmental budgets for the 2025/26 financial year. The increases provided for the departmental budgets are detailed in Appendix C.
- 3.9.5 It is prudent for the budget to include a general contingency of £1m. At this stage, it is considered sufficient to cover the potential for price changes and increases in demand-led budgets, as well as a general contingency for uncertain and unknown items.
- 3.9.6 An additional contingency budget of £1.5m has been set aside to mitigate the potential impact of a proposed change to the accounting for pooled investment funds. A statutory override of the relevant accounting standard is currently in place to prevent changes in the fair value of these funds from impacting on the Council's General Fund, however this is due to expire on 31 March 2025. The Council has a £10m investment with the CCLA Property Fund that is currently valued at £8.576m. If the override were to end, and the value of the Council's investment remained the same at the end of the 2025/26 financial year, a £1.5m charge would need to be made to the General Fund, which would be covered by the contingency included within next year's budget. Gains or losses would then be charged to the Council's General Fund each year based on the changes in the value of the original investment. An estimate of the impact of this change has been included within the Council's consultation response to Government on the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. Government have since announced that the override will end on 31 March 2025 for all new pooled investments, but that further work will be undertaken to determine whether transitional arrangements for existing investments should be put in place. At the time of writing this report, no further announcement has been made, therefore it is considered prudent for the £1.5m provision to remain in the budget.
- 3.9.7 Additional funding has been included within the 2025/26 budget for increased demand within Adult's and Children's Social Care. The increase in estimated costs has been based on prior year demand increases.

- 3.9.8 During 2024/25, £4.2m of funding per year was approved by Council to drive improvement within Children's Services. This has been included within the budget for 2025/26 and uplifted to £4.8m to take into account the estimated increase in staffing costs from the Local Government Pay Award and the increase in National Insurance costs. It is anticipated that this programme will have a positive impact on reducing the demand for costly residential placements. A savings target of £1.5m has been included within the proposed savings in Appendix G to reflect this.
- 3.9.9 Following clarification from the Department for Education that the costs of special educational needs assessments and education psychology services can no longer be met from the Dedicated Schools Grant, an additional £0.997m has therefore been built into the base budget for 2025/26 to accommodate this.

### **3.10 Local Government Finance Settlement**

- 3.10.1 The Government announced the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement on 18 December 2024, with the final Settlement published on 03 February 2025.
- 3.10.2 As part of the Liverpool City Region, the Council will continue to participate in a pilot scheme of 100% business rates retention. Government have reiterated that the pilot scheme will operate under a "No Detriment" policy, in that no council operating as part of the pilot will see a reduction in their funding in comparison to what it would have received under the 49% national scheme. The pilot will result in additional business rates being retained by the Council, although offset by Revenue Support Grant and Local Authority Better Care Grant no longer being received.
- 3.10.3 Government has committed to a comprehensive review of its approach to distributing funding between local authorities, with the aim of introducing reforms to funding from 2026/27 onwards. The proposals that are currently subject to consultation are related to the objectives and principles of redistribution, with no indicative allocations provided. It is likely that this funding review will coincide with a reset of the business rates system, meaning that there is a risk that the LCR business rates retention pilot will end, with Halton losing the growth that has accumulated over the duration of the scheme.
- 3.10.4 For 2025/26, the Council will receive Top-Up Grant funding of £5.638m, representing the difference between Halton's baseline funding need, as assessed by Government, and the amount that can be generated from business rates. The Top-Up Grant includes £1.631m for the Adult Social Care Discharge Grant which has been rolled in with the Local Authority Better Grant and included within the Council's increased business rates retention.

- 3.10.5 The Government's Spending Power analysis (the total of business rates, council tax and Government grant funding available to each council) calculates that over the period 2010/11 to 2025/26, in cash terms there has been an increase in funding for Halton of 13.4% and in real terms (i.e. allowing for inflation), a cut of 22.3%. This real terms cut equates to a reduction in funding of £791.40 per dwelling within the Borough.
- 3.10.6 The Council is required to provide an annual forecast of business rates to Government by the end of January of the preceding year. The forecast has been undertaken and the Council expect net collectable rates to be £65.491m for 2025/26.
- 3.10.7 The business rates multiplier is fixed centrally by Government and then applied to each premises' rateable value. For 2025/26 the small business rates multiplier will be frozen at 49.9p whereas the standard rate multiplier will be increased by 1.7%, from 54.6p to 55.5p. The cost of freezing the small business rates multiplier is fully met by Central Government, through the provision of additional grant funding to the Council.
- 3.10.8 The level of Adult Social Care council tax precept levied by the Council in each year since its introduction is detailed in Table E below.

**Table E – Adult Social Care Precept Levels**

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Adult Social Care Precept</b>
2016/17	2%
2017/18	3%
2018/19	3%
2019/20	0%
2020/21	2%
2021/22	3%
2022/23	1%
2023/24	2%
2024/25	2%

- 3.10.9 The Policy Statement, published on 28 November 2024 confirmed that the maximum permitted Adult Social Care precept for 2025/26 will be an increase of 2%. The Settlement includes an assumption that councils will adopt the maximum 2% Adult Social Care precept.

### **3.11 Budget Outlook**

- 3.11.1 The Final Local Government Finance Settlement, published on 03 February 2025, provided funding allocations for the 2025/26 financial year only.

3.11.2 Government has stated their intention to provide councils with a multi-year settlement for 2026/27 onwards, which will coincide with the planned introduction of reforms to the local government funding system.

3.11.3 Alongside the settlement, Government have issued a consultation seeking views on the objectives and principles of local government funding reform. There are no detailed proposals included within the consultation, although one of the stated aims of the reform is to target additional funding at areas with higher service needs and demands, and to recognise that authorities have a differing ability to raise revenue through council tax.

3.11.4 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy has been updated to take into account the 2025/26 Local Government Finance Settlement and multi-year allocations and savings measures already agreed or proposed. It includes a number of assumptions for 2026/27 including:

- Settlement Funding Assessment as per 2025/26 plus 2% inflation.
- Pay, prices and income growth of 2%.
- Social care contract growth of 4%.

3.11.5 The resulting total funding gap over the subsequent three financial years (2026/27 to 2028/29) is forecast to be in the region of £43.169m. This is in addition to the funding gap of £29.384m for 2025/26, giving a total funding gap of £72.553m over the next four financial years. This funding gap is inclusive of the estimated costs of Exceptional Financial Support up to the 2028/29 financial year.

### **3.12 Halton's Council Tax**

3.12.1 The Government no longer operates council tax capping powers, but instead there is a requirement for councils to hold a local referendum if they propose to increase council tax by more than a percentage threshold prescribed by the Government.

3.12.2 The Government have confirmed that the general council tax referendum threshold will remain at 3% for 2025/26, with an additional 2% Adult Social Care precept increase permitted. The Final Grant Settlement includes an assumption that councils will adopt the maximum Adult Social Care precept and general council tax increase.

3.12.3 The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill, published on 11 May 2022 introduced legislation which will allow 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 introduction of the 100% premium was approved by Council on 08 March 2023 and will come into effect on 01 April 2025.

3.12.4 The same Bill referred to in Para 3.51 also allowed authorities to apply the 100% premium to unfurnished and unoccupied properties bringing forward the minimum period from 2 years to 1 year. This will allow the Council to bring empty properties back into use at a quicker rate.

3.12.5 The tax base (Band D equivalent) for the Borough has previously been set by Council at 36,936.

3.12.6 As at March 2025 it is estimated that there will be a balanced position on the council tax element of the Collection Fund and there will therefore be no surplus available to contribute towards the 2025/26 budget.

3.12.7 The combined effect of the budget proposals presented within this report, Government grant support, business rate retention and the council tax base, requires the Council to set a Band D council tax for Halton of £1,846.66 (equivalent to £35.51 per week). This is an increase of 4.99% (£87.77 per annum or £1.69 per week) over the current year.

### 3.13 Parish Precepts

3.13.1 The Parish Councils have set their precepts for the year as shown below, with the resultant additional Council Tax for a Band D property in these areas being as follows:

**Table F – Parish Precept Levels 2025/26**

	Precept	Precept Increase		Additional Council Tax	Basic Council Tax
	£	£	%	£	£
Hale	xx,xxx	x,xxx	x.xx	xx.xx	x,xxx.xx
Daresbury	14,430	4,750	49.07%	47.94	1,894.60
Moore	6,271	55	0.88%	18.23	1,864.89
Preston Brook	73,538	21,094	40.22%	197.15	2,043.81
Halebank	40,960	900	2.25%	75.02	1,921.68
Sandy Moor	47,853	1,135	2.43%	29.09	1,875.75

### 3.14 Average Council Tax

3.14.1 In addition, it is also necessary to calculate the average Council Tax for the area as a whole. This is the figure required by Government and used for comparative purposes. For a Band D property the figure is £x,xxx.xx, an increase of £xx.xx per annum.

### **3.15 Police Precept**

3.15.1 The Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner has set the precept on the Council at £10.229m, which is £276.94 for a Band D property, an increase of £14.00 or 5.32%. The figures for each Band are shown in Recommendation 5 in Appendix A.

### **3.16 Fire Precept**

3.16.1 The Cheshire Fire Authority has set the precept on the Council at £3.512m, which is £95.09 for a Band D property, an increase of £5.00 or 5.55%. The figures for each Band are shown in Recommendation 6 in Appendix A.

### **3.17 Liverpool City Region Mayoral Precept**

3.17.1 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has set the precept on the Council at £0.886m which is £24.00 for a Band D property, an increase of £5.00, or 26.32%. The figures for each Band are shown in Recommendation 7 in Appendix A.

### **3.18 Total Council Tax**

3.18.1 Combining all these figures will give the Total Council Tax for 2025/26 and these are shown in Recommendation 8 in Appendix A. The total Band D Council Tax (before Parish precepts) is £2,242.69, an increase of £111.77 or 5.25%. The inclusion of parish precepts means the increase in Hale is x.xx%, in Daresbury is 5.24%, in Moore is 5.20%, in Preston Brook is 7.36%, in Halebank is 5.07%, and in Sandymoor is 5.17%.

3.18.2 It is expected that Halton's total council tax will continue to be amongst the lowest in the North West. Given that nearly half of all properties in the Borough are in Band A, and 82% of properties are in Bands A-C, most households will pay less than the "headline" figure. In addition, many households will receive reduced council tax bills through discounts, and these adjustments will be shown on their bills.

3.18.3 A complex set of resolutions, shown in Appendix A, needs to be agreed by Council to ensure that the Budget and Council Tax level are set in a way which fully complies with legislation, incorporating changes required under the Localism Act 2012.

### **3.19 Business Rates**

3.19.1 For 2025/26, a 1.7% inflationary increase has been applied to the business rates retention system. The impact for Halton is a 1.7% increase to top-up grant received, plus an additional £1.631m for the Adult Social Care Discharge Grant which will be included within the



Liverpool City Region Business Rates Retention Pilot in 2025/26 instead of being received as a separate grant.

3.19.2 The standard business rates multiplier has been increased by 1.7p to 55.5p, with the small business rates multiplier again being frozen. Government have confirmed that authorities will be compensated for the freeze in the small business rates multiplier by an increase in the under-indexing compensation grant.

3.19.3 An estimate of Halton's anticipated business rates income for 2025/26 was provided to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in January 2025.

3.19.4 The impact of the changes to Halton's Council Tax and Business Rates income is shown in Table G.

**Table G – Council Tax and Business Rates Income 2025/26**

	2024/25 Income £m	2025/26 Income £m	Change in Funding £m
<b>Council Tax</b>			
Council Tax Base Income	64.039	68.208	4.169
Council Tax Surplus / Deficit	0.234	0	-0.234
<b>Total Income from Council Tax</b>	<b>64.273</b>	<b>68.208</b>	<b>3.935</b>
<b>Business Rates</b>			
Net Rates Payable	63.091	65.491	2.400
Business Rates Surplus / Deficit	2.472	-0.116	-2.588
Section 31 Grants	17.851	17.328	-0.523
Under-Indexation Compensation	-2.710	-2.882	-0.172
Top-Up Grant	3.940	5.638	1.698
Top-Up Reconciliation	0.579	0	-0.579
<b>Total Income from Business Rates</b>	<b>85.223</b>	<b>85.459</b>	<b>0.236</b>
<b>Total Council Income</b>	<b>149.496</b>	<b>153.667</b>	<b>4.171</b>

### 3.20 Capital Programme

3.20.1 The following table brings together the existing capital programme spend and shows how the capital programme will be funded.

**Table H – Capital Programme 2025/26 – 2027/28**

	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
<b>Spending</b>			
Scheme Estimates	69,614	10,847	3,715

<b>Funding</b>			
Borrowing and Leasing	48,717	2,270	1,669
Grants and External Funds	19,497	8,177	2,046
Direct Revenue Finance	0	0	0
Capital Receipts	1,400	400	0
	<b>69,614</b>	<b>10,847</b>	<b>3,715</b>

3.20.2 The committed Capital Programme is shown in Appendix E.

3.20.3 As the Capital Programme is fully committed, there are no funds available for new capital schemes unless external funding is available or further savings are identified to cover capital financing costs.

### 3.21 Prudential Code

3.21.1 The Local Government Act 2003 introduced the Prudential Code which provides a framework for the self-regulation of capital expenditure. The key objectives of the Code are to ensure that the Council's:

- capital expenditure plans are affordable;
- external borrowing is within prudent and sustainable levels;
- treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice; and
- there is accountability through providing a clear and transparent framework.

3.21.2 To demonstrate that Councils have fulfilled these objectives, the Prudential Code sets out a number of indicators which must be used. These are included in the Treasury Management Strategy report elsewhere on the Agenda. The prudential indicators are monitored throughout the year and reported as part of the Treasury Management monitoring reports to the Executive Board.

### 3.22 School Budgets

3.22.1 Schools are fully funded by Government Grants, primarily the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which is mainly used to fund the Individual School Budgets. DSG is allocated in four blocks: Schools Block, Central Schools Services Block, Early Years Block and High Needs Block. The funding is subsequently allocated to schools by way of a formula, in accordance with the National Funding Formula (NFF) framework introduced in 2018/19.

3.22.2 The 2025/26 DSG settlement was announced on 18 December 2024, allocating Halton a total of £168.551m, which is broken down as £117.833m for the Schools Block, £0.765m for the Central Schools Services Block, £29.267m for the High Needs Block, and £20.686m for

the Early Years Block. This last Block is, as usual, provisional, being based on the January 2024 Early Years census; it will be amended during the Summer to reflect January 2025 data.

- 3.22.3 Schools Block pupil numbers in mainstream primary and secondary schools have decreased from 17,830 for 2024/25 to 17,489 for 2025/26. Funding for mainstream primary and secondary schools is based on the pupil cohort on the October 2024 census.
- 3.22.4 The Schools Block of £117.833m includes the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG), and is now added together with the similar mainstreaming of Teachers' Pay Additional Grant (TPAG), Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grant (TPECG), and the full-year effect of Core Schools Block Grant (CSBG, introduced as an addition during the current financial year). A small uplift of less than 1% has been added to formula funding values in recognition of inflationary pressures. The effect of all these is that the Schools Block has increased by £6.645m when compared to 2024/25. The Schools Block is distributed to schools and academies in accordance with Schools' Forum recommendations and in compliance with the National Funding Formula (NFF) requirements.
- 3.22.5 The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) will be set, with Schools Forum agreement at 0.0%. This is in line with the greatest protection allowed in 2025-26 by the Department of Education, which suggests that because the full-year effect of CSBG 'bakes in' an increase to the baseline, a zero MFG still represents increased funding. By comparison, last year MFG of up to +0.5% was allowable, which Halton replicated.
- 3.22.6 The Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) was split from the Schools Block for the first time in 2018/19, following the introduction of the ring-fenced requirement for the Schools Block to be wholly passed to primary and secondary schools - with the exception of any Schools Forum-agreed transfer to the High Needs Block. There are regulations in place which limit what the CSSB grant can be used for and limit budgets to the same level as previous years. The CSSB includes budgets which are de-delegated from maintained schools. As more schools convert to academy status, the de-delegated funds are reduced unless schools are asked to contribute a higher amount.
- 3.22.7 The Early Years Block indicative allocation for 2025/26 is £20.686m which is £5.572m greater than the revised 2024/25 allocation. Reasons for the increase include an annualised increase in the hourly funding rates, and a presumed continued expansion in 2-year old and, particularly, pre-2-year old provision, with numbers expected to significantly increase from September 2025. The Block is presently indicative as its underpinning activity data is based on the Early Years Census taking place in January. Until the data from the January 2025

census can be validated, and allocations recalculated, during the Summer, the Block is provisional in nature.

- 3.22.8 The hourly rate the Council is funded at for 3 and 4 year old provision, (as opposed to the hourly rate we pay providers), has increased from £5.72 per hour for 2024/25 to £5.97 per hour for 2025/26. The hourly rate the Council is funded at for 2 year old provision has increased from £8.20 per hour to £8.52 per hour and also the hourly rate for the expansion to include under 2 year old provision is £11.60 per hour (up from £11.18).
- 3.22.9 The High Needs Block for 2024/25 was £27.079m before recoument by the Department for Education (DfE) for commissioned places in special academies and further education. For 2025/26, the High Needs Block before deductions is £29.267m, which is an increase of £2.188m or 8.1%. Further conditions of grant in respect to High Needs have been continued for 2025/26 which require all authorities to pass on a minimum guaranteed increase to their specialist provisions.
- 3.22.10 The Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) rates for school age children have not been increased compared to 2024/25, and so remain at £1,480 per primary pupils and £1,050 per secondary pupils who are, or have been eligible, for Free School Meals in the last six years. Children who have been adopted from care and children who leave care under a special guardianship order or residence order will be funded at £2,570 per pupil. Eligibility for the Service Children Premium will be funded at £340 per pupil. The amount for Looked after Children which comes to the Council for distribution is £2,570 per pupil. Early Years Pupil Premium, which forms part of the Early Years Block rather than sitting outside it as a separate grant, is increasing, from £388 to £570 (£1.00 per hour per child).

### **3.23 Section 25 Report**

- 3.23.1 Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 places a requirement on the Chief Financial Officer to report on the robustness of the estimates included in the budget and the adequacy of the reserves for which the budget provides.

#### Robustness of Estimates

- 3.23.2 It is clear within the report the Council finds itself in an extremely challenging financial position. Regular financial monitoring reports have been shared with the Executive Board and Policy and Performance Boards over the past year, highlighting cost pressures and the impact of those being significantly higher than what has been allowed in the 2024/25 budget.

- 3.23.3 The 2025/26 budget setting process and the information provided should be sufficient to allow the Council to come to an informed view regarding the 2025/26 revenue budget, capital programme and council tax. Significant additional budget has been identified next year to cover the main 2024/25 overspending areas including, Children's Social Care, Adult Community Care, Internal Care Homes and Home to School Transport.
- 3.23.4 The impact of updated estimates around inflation, service demand and increasing complexities of care have been included within the forecast of costs over the next year.
- 3.23.5 It is considered the net budget position is sufficient to cover planned net expenditure over the next 12 months. The impact of updated estimates around inflation, service demand and increasing complexities of care have been included within the forecast of costs. Nevertheless as these form the greatest risk to the Council's budget position, the Council must be alert to these risks and immediate action must be taken throughout the financial year where it is identified costs and demand will exceed the available budget.
- 3.23.6 Greater risk is also identified within the planned 2025/26 savings. Failure to act and achieve these savings within the correct timeframe will have a detrimental impact on the Council's finances.
- 3.23.7 To help mitigate against the risk, regular reports will be received by Executive Board every other month to advise on the updated financial position, and these will also be shared with the Policy and Performance Boards. The Council's Financial Management team will work with all service leads to develop rigorous budget monitoring processes and identify immediately where spend is out of alignment against budget.
- 3.23.8 Similar to many councils, Halton is experiencing a significant deficit in respect of the cost of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It is forecast that this deficit may be £10.8m by the end of 2025/26. The Council is currently part of the Government's Delivering Best Value in SEND programme, to bring about changes in service delivery which will result in cost reductions.
- 3.23.9 Whilst this expenditure would normally be funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), legislation requires that any deficit is funded from the Council's general fund. This would have a significant impact for the Council and require additional capitalisation under the Exceptional Financial Support arrangement. The previous Government introduced a statutory over-ride, whereby the SEND deficit can be carried forward each year-end as part of the DSG budget, but the statutory override expires at 31 March 2026. However, the Government are fully aware of the difficulties this would cause for councils and it is

expected that clarification of the position going forward will be made as part of the Government's commitment to significant funding reform in 2026/27.

#### Adequacy of Reserves

- 3.23.10 The Council has for a number of years been reliant on Council reserves to help meet the level of cost pressures over and above available budget. As a result the Council is now in a position where useable reserves are insufficient to meet the current and future budget deficits. As a result the Council are in a position where they have no option but to seek Exceptional Financial Support through borrowing to fund day to day running costs.
- 3.23.11 The current level of general and earmarked reserves totals £54.8m, although only £11.4m of this is available for immediate need. The remaining balance of reserves are committed for specific purposes.
- 3.23.12 Within future budgets the Council must be committed to increasing the value of reserves held for general purposes. As part of the 2026/27 financial forecast, £2m growth has been applied to add to the value of the Council's General Reserve. It is assumed this will be applied year on year until such point where it is considered the level of reserves are suitably matched against future financial risk.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Council's budget will support the delivery of all of the Council's services.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The financial implications relating to the Council's budget are as set out within the report and appendices.

#### **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**

The budget will support the Council in achieving the aims and objectives set out in the Community Strategy for Halton and the Council's Corporate Plan and has been prepared in consideration of the priorities listed above.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The budget is prepared in accordance with detailed guidance and timetable to ensure the statutory requirements are met and a budget is prepared that aligns resources with corporate objectives.

7.2 A number of key factors and risks have been identified in the budget, these are provided mainly within the section covering the statutory Section 25 Report. Close monitoring and regular reporting of the updated outturn forecast will give the Council the best and most timely opportunity to correct the budget. Immediate action must be taken where and when overspends against budget are highlighted.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken in relation to the individual savings proposals as required.

## **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 revenue budget, capital programme and council tax for 2025/26.

## **11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

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

## **12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

12.1 05 March 2025.

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

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Local Government Finance Report (England) 2025/26	Financial Management Halton Stadium	Steve Baker

## APPENDIX A

**DRAFT RESOLUTION FOR SUBMISSION TO THE COUNCIL  
AT ITS MEETING ON 05 MARCH 2025**

**RECOMMENDATION:** that the Council adopt the following resolution:

1. The policies outlined in this paper be adopted, including the budget and council tax for 2025/26 and the Capital Programme set out in Appendix E.
2. That it be noted that at the meeting on 4 December 2024 the Council agreed the following:
  - (a) The Council Tax Base 2025/26 for the whole Council area is 36,936 (item T in the formula in Section 31B(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the Act) and
  - (b) For dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates, be set out as follows:

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

being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its Council Tax Base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which special items relate.

3. Calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2025/26 (excluding Parish precepts) is £68,208,788.
4. In accordance with the relevant provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (Sections 31 to 36), the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2025/26 and agreed as follows:
  - (a) £xxx,xxx,xxx – being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the said Act, taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.



- (b) £xxx,xxx,xxx – being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
- (c) £xx,xxx,xxx – being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year (item R in the formula in Section 31A(4) of the Act).
- (d) £x,xxx.xx – being the amount at 3(c) above (item R), all divided by item T (2 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
- (e) £xxx,xxx.xx – being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act, each individual Parish precept being:

	£
Hale	xx,xxx
Daresbury	14,430
Moore	6,271
Preston Brook	73,538
Halebank	40,960
Sandymoor	47,853

- (f) £1,846.66 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by item T (2(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates.
- (g) Part of the Council's Area

	£
Hale	xx.xx
Daresbury	47.94
Moore	18.23
Preston Brook	197.15
Halebank	75.02
Sandymoor	29.09

being the amounts given by adding to the amounts at 3(e) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in

those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings of its area to which one or more special items relate.

(h) Part of the Council's Area

Band	Hale	Daresbury	Moore	Preston Brook	Halebank	Sandymoor	All other Parts of the Council's Area
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
A	x,xxx.xx	1,263.07	1,243.26	1,362.54	1,281.12	1,250.50	1,231.11
B	x,xxx.xx	1,473.58	1,450.47	1,589.63	1,494.64	1,458.92	1,436.29
C	x,xxx.xx	1,684.09	1,657.68	1,816.72	1,708.16	1,667.33	1,641.48
<b>D</b>	<b>x,xxx.xx</b>	<b>1,894.60</b>	<b>1,864.89</b>	<b>2,043.81</b>	<b>1,921.68</b>	<b>1,875.75</b>	<b>1,846.66</b>
E	x,xxx.xx	2,315.62	2,279.31	2,497.99	2,348.72	2,292.58	2,257.03
F	x,xxx.xx	2,736.64	2,693.73	2,952.17	2,775.76	2,709.42	2,667.40
G	x,xxx.xx	3,157.67	3,108.15	3,406.35	3,202.80	3,126.25	3,077.77
H	x,xxx.xx	3,789.20	3,729.78	4,087.62	3,843.36	3,751.50	3,693.32

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 3(f) and 3(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in Valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

5. It is further noted that for the year 2025/26 the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner has stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

	£
A	184.63
B	215.40
C	246.17
<b>D</b>	<b>276.94</b>
E	338.48
F	400.02
G	461.57
H	553.88

6. It is further noted that for the year 2025/26 the Fire Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

	£
A	63.39
B	73.96
C	84.52
<b>D</b>	<b>95.09</b>
E	116.22
F	137.35
G	158.48
H	190.18

7. It is further noted that for the year 2025/26 the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

	£
A	16.00
B	18.67
C	21.33
<b>D</b>	<b>24.00</b>
E	29.33
F	34.67
G	40.00
H	48.00

8. That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 4h, 5, 6 and 7 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2025/26 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Band	Hale	Daresbury	Moore	Preston Brook	Halebank	Sandymoor	All other Parts of the Council's Area
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
A	x,xxx.xx	1,527.09	1,507.28	1,626.56	1,545.14	1,514.52	1,495.13
B	x,xxx.xx	1,781.61	1,758.50	1,897.66	1,802.67	1,766.95	1,744.32
C	x,xxx.xx	2,036.11	2,009.70	2,168.75	2,060.18	2,019.36	1,993.50
<b>D</b>	<b>x,xxx.xx</b>	<b>2,290.63</b>	<b>2,260.92</b>	<b>2,439.84</b>	<b>2,317.71</b>	<b>2,271.78</b>	<b>2,242.69</b>
E	x,xxx.xx	2,799.65	2,763.34	2,982.02	2,832.75	2,776.61	2,741.06
F	x,xxx.xx	3,308.69	3,265.77	3,524.21	3,347.80	3,281.46	3,239.44
G	x,xxx.xx	3,817.72	3,768.20	4,066.40	3,862.85	3,786.30	3,737.82
H	x,xxx.xx	4,581.26	4,521.84	4,879.68	4,635.42	4,543.56	4,485.38

being satisfied that:

- (a) The total amount yielded by its Council Taxes for the said financial year will be sufficient, so far as is practicable, to provide for items mentioned at 4(a) to (c) above; and, to the extent that they are not, to be provided for by any other means.
  - (b) Those amounts which relate to a part only of its area will secure, so far as is practicable, that the precept or portion of a precept relating to such part will be provided for only by the amount yielded by such of its Council Taxes as relate to that part.
9. The Director - Finance be authorised at any time during the financial year 2025/26 to borrow on behalf of the Council by way of gross bank overdraft such sums as he shall deem necessary for the purposes of this paragraph, but not such that in any event the said overdraft at any time exceeds £10m on an individual bank account (£0.5m net across all bank accounts) as the Council may temporarily require.

## APPENDIX B

## DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONAL BUDGETS

£000

<b>Adult Services Directorate</b>	<b>71,206</b>
<b>Children's Services Directorate</b>	
Children's Services	52,693
Education, Inclusion & Provision	11,231
	<b>64,016</b>
<b>Public Health Directorate</b>	<b>1,479</b>
<b>Environment &amp; Regeneration Directorate</b>	
Community & Greenspace	22,585
Economy, Enterprise & Property	2,319
Policy, Planning and Transportation	9,196
	<b>34,100</b>
<b>Chief Executive's Directorate</b>	
Finance	6,301
ICT & Support Services	3,542
Legal & Democratic Services	-95
Chief Executive's Delivery Unit	1,340
	<b>11,088</b>
<b>Departmental Operational Budgets</b>	<b>181,889</b>
Corporate and Democracy	1,255
<b>Total Operational Budget</b>	<b>183,052</b>

KEY COMPONENTS IN DEVELOPING THE DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONAL BUDGETS

	Adult Social Care	Children's Services	Education, Inclusion & Provision	Public Health	Community & Greenspace	Economy, Enterprise & Property	Policy, Planning & Transportation	Finance	ICT & Support Services	Legal & Democratic Services	Chief Executive's Delivery Unit	Corporate & Democracy	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>2024/25 Base Budget</b>	<b>59,800</b>	<b>38,071</b>	<b>9,675</b>	<b>1,460</b>	<b>25,407</b>	<b>2,337</b>	<b>8,405</b>	<b>5,029</b>	<b>2,277</b>	<b>-571</b>	<b>1,215</b>	<b>-3,608</b>	<b>149,496</b>
Staffing	2,294	562	504	441	854	126	200	338	189	166	136	-37	5,773
Care Contract Costs	9,768	13,502	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23,270
Care Homes Expenditure	452	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	452
Children's Improvement Plan	0	4,601	0	0	0	0	0	0	87	114	0	0	4,802
SEN Costs Previously Funded from DSG	0	0	997	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	997
Schools Transport	0	0	682	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	682
Concessionary Travel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	154	0	0	0	0	154
Other Transport	102	10	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	124
Additional Fleet Driver Posts	0	0	0	0	0	0	358	0	0	0	0	0	358
Environmental Consultancy	0	0	0	0	0	0	143	0	0	0	0	0	143
Premises Costs	-39	-34	0	0	-245	-126	-5	0	-21	0	0	0	-470
Software Costs	0	0	4	0	3	1	0	21	584	0	3	0	616
Postage Costs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	228	0	0	0	228
Legal Expenses	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	204	0	0	204
Capital Costs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,094	1,094
Interest Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,124	4,124
Contingency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,561	4,561
Other Costs	279	98	0	739	312	60	80	183	0	1	0	148	1,900
Reserves Movements	0	1,000	0	-1,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sales, Fees, Charges , and Other Income	-294	3	-55	-2	-258	-31	-46	-112	-34	-9	-14	-91	-943
Loss of Youth Justice Service Income	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	232	0	0	0	232
Rent Allowances Shortfall	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	100
Changes in Grant Funding	709	-3,220	-276	-114	-3,218	0	0	42	0	0	0	-5,885	-11,962
Prior Year Unachieved Savings	1,015	0	0	0	0	52	150	0	0	0	0	4,000	5,217
Savings Approved February 2023	-1,225	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-1,225
Proposed Savings (See Appendix G)	-1,655	-1,900	-300	-45	-270	-100	-100	-100	0	0	0	-2,406	-6,876
Transfers Between Departments	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	646	0	0	0	-646	0
<b>2025/26 Base Budget</b>	<b>71,206</b>	<b>52,693</b>	<b>11,231</b>	<b>1,479</b>	<b>22,585</b>	<b>2,319</b>	<b>9,196</b>	<b>6,301</b>	<b>3,542</b>	<b>-95</b>	<b>1,340</b>	<b>1,255</b>	<b>183,052</b>
Total Growth from 2024/25 Budget	11,406	14,622	1,556	19	-2,822	-18	791	1,272	1,265	476	125	4,863	33,555

## APPENDIX D

## MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL FORECAST

	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000
<b>Spending</b>			
Previous Year's Budget	183,052	199,256	217,324
<u>Inflation</u>			
Pay	2,303	2,330	2,358
Prices	3,748	4,194	4,342
Income	-654	-670	-686
<u>Other</u>			
Service Demand Pressures	6,253	8,115	11,653
Contingency	1,500	2,000	2,000
End of Increased Business Rates Retention	2,099	2,099	2,099
Replenish Reserves	2,000	0	0
Budget Forecast	199,256	217,234	239,090
<b>Resources</b>			
Baseline Business Rates Funding and Top-Up Grant	87,287	29,032	90,813
Council Tax	70,950	73,802	76,769
	158,237	162,834	167,582
<b>Cumulative Funding Gap</b>	<b>-42,064</b>	<b>-55,535</b>	<b>-72,553</b>

## APPENDIX E

## COMMITTED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/28

SCHEME	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Schools Capital Projects	1,306	0	0
<b>Children's Directorate</b>	<b>1,306</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Disabled Facilities Grant	600	600	600
Stairlifts	540	540	540
<b>Adult's Directorate</b>	<b>1,140</b>	<b>1,140</b>	<b>1,140</b>
Stadium Minor Works	30	30	30
Children's Playground Equipment	65	65	65
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340	340	340
Upton Improvements	13	0	0
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12	0	0
Open Spaces Schemes	600	600	600
Runcorn Town Park	280	280	0
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,889	0	0
Pickerings Pasture Café	491	0	0
Replacement Cremator Widnes	224	0	0
Litter Bins	20	20	20
3MG	134	0	0
Equality Act Improvement Works	300	300	300
Property Improvements	200	200	200
Runcorn Town Centre Development	7,190	0	0
Port of Weston	3,957	0	0
Sci-tech Daresbury Project Violet	2,200	0	0
Street Lighting – Structural Maintenance	200	200	200
East Runcorn Connectivity	5,852	5,852	0
Risk Management	120	120	120
Fleet Replacements	1,423	1,000	0
<b>Environment &amp; Regen Directorate</b>	<b>25,540</b>	<b>9,007</b>	<b>1,875</b>
IT Rolling Programme	700	700	700
Halton Smart Microgrid	10,872	0	0
Transformation Programme	1,000	0	0
Exceptional Financial Support	29,056	0	0
<b>Chief Executive Directorate</b>	<b>41,628</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>700</b>
<b>Total Capital Programme</b>	<b>69,614</b>	<b>10,847</b>	<b>3,715</b>



## APPENDIX F

## PREVIOUSLY APPROVED BUDGET SAVINGS 2025/26

## Adult Social Care Department

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £000	Description of Saving Proposal	2025/26 Savings Value £000
ASC1	Housing Solutions	474	Remodel the current service based on good practice evidence from other areas.	125
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.	100
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” i.e. focused upon prevention.	1,000
<b>Total Adult Social Care Department</b>				<b>1,225</b>

### Children and Families Department

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £000	Description of Saving Proposal	2025/26 Savings Value £000
C1	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.	22
<b>Total Children and Families Department</b>				<b>22</b>

### Community and Greenspace Department

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £000	Description of Saving Proposal	2025/26 Savings Value £000
COMM5	Stadium and 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.	12
<b>Total Community and Greenspace Department</b>				<b>12</b>

## Finance Department

<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Net Budget £000</b>	<b>Description of Saving Proposal</b>	<b>2025/26 Savings Value £000</b>
F9	Internal Audit	300	Restructure in light of potential retirements over the next two years within the Internal Audit Team.	50
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
<b>Total Finance Department</b>				<b>90</b>

## APPENDIX G

## PROPOSED BUDGET SAVINGS 2025/26 – TO BE APPROVED

Item	Proposed Saving	Amount £000
	<b>Corporate Items</b>	
1	Purchase of Additional Leave – development of a voluntary scheme to enable staff to purchase additional annual leave.	100
2	Voluntary Severance Scheme – development of a policy whereby staff may be offered voluntary severance in appropriate circumstances, but without creating a significant pension strain liability.	200
3	Apprenticeships - implement an “Apprentice First” policy, with all appropriate vacant posts assessed initially to determine whether they might be suitable as an apprenticeship. This will build longer term resilience into the organisation’s workforce and provide short term cost savings by drawing down funding from the apprenticeship levy. The scheme will be co-ordinated by the newly appointed Apprenticeship Officer, funded and supported by the Transformation Delivery Unit.	200
4	Agency Staff Reduction – continuation of the work being co-ordinated by the Transformation Delivery Unit to reduce the reliance upon agency workers across the Council, in particular within Adults and Children’s Social Care. Target net savings of £1.7m for 2025/26, £1.3m for 2026/27 and £1.1m for 2027/28.	1,700
5	Review all existing contracts across the Council to re-consider their requirements and performance on the basis of outputs achieved.	200
	<b>Environment &amp; Regeneration Directorate</b>	
6	Accelerate the lease or sale of surplus land, non-operational buildings, surplus space within building, etc. to either generate lease rentals or capital receipts to help fund capital schemes and thereby reduce future capital financing costs.	100
7	Green Waste – increase green waste charges from £43 to £50 per annum, to bring Halton onto a comparable basis with charges levied by neighbouring councils.	100
8	Area Forums – cease the funding for Area Forums.	170
9	LED Advertising Screens – install LED advertising screens at appropriate locations within the Borough in order to generate advertising revenue. The estimated annual income is the Council’s share of advertising revenue net of capital financing costs for the installations.	100
	<b>Adults Directorate</b>	
10	Community Wardens/Telecare Service – a review will be undertaken of the various options available for the future delivery	280

	of these services, with support from the Transformation Delivery Unit.	
11	Community Care – continuation of the work being undertaken to review care provided through the Community Care budget, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.	1,000
12	Review of Service Delivery Options – reviews will be undertaken of the various service delivery options available for a number of areas including; Day Services, Halton Supported Housing Network, In-House Care Homes, Reablement Service and Oak Meadow.	375
<b>Children’s Directorate</b>		
13	Home to School Transport – undertake consultation with stakeholders and partners with regard to implementing a new Home to School and College Travel and Transport Policy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.	300
14	Residential Placements – continuation of the work being undertaken to review residential placements, especially high cost placements, and identify opportunities to step-down placements or find alternatives, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.	1,500
15	Independent Fostering Agencies and Out of Borough Fostering – continuation of the work being undertaken to review placements, to increase use of In-Borough foster carers wherever possible and thereby reduce costs, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.	200
16	Court Costs – implementation of measures in conjunction with Legal Services, to reduce the backlog and ongoing number of Children’s cases going to court, thereby reducing the timescales involved and cost of court proceedings, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.	200
<b>Public Health Directorate</b>		
17	Pest Control – increase charges for pest control on the basis of benchmarking data, to bring Halton onto a comparable basis with charges levied by neighbouring councils.	45
<b>Chief Executive’s Directorate</b>		
18	Deputy Mayor – cease provision of the Deputy Mayor’s allowance, whilst retaining a nominated Deputy Mayor.	6
19	Debt Management – undertake a review of debt management policies and procedures, in order to implement a more robust approach to debt management and debt recovery, considering options such as seeking payment in advance wherever possible, to improve cashflow and reduce the risk of non-recovery.	100
<b>Total</b>		<b>6,876</b>

## Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 On 01 February 2023 Council approved the three year transformation programme and funding arrangements. The report set out the Council's approach to transformation, shape of the programme and how it will be resourced.
- 1.2 It was agreed that the Council adopt an approach, commonly adopted by other Councils, whereby this investment in transformation is regarded as one-off expenditure in order to deliver a long-term, sustainable, financial position. On 02 August 2022 Government issued a direction which gives local authorities the continued freedom to use capital receipts from the sale of their own assets, to help fund the revenue costs of transformation projects and thereby deliver savings.
- 1.3 The current direction is in place for financial years 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 only. In November 2024, as part of the policy statement on local government finance, Government signaled intentions to extend this through to 2030.
- 1.4 In December 2023 the Secretary of State for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) announced a call for views inviting local authorities, sector representatives and other stakeholders to provide views on a set of options with respect to capital flexibilities and borrowing, to be managed locally, that could be used to encourage and enable local authorities to invest in ways that reduce the cost of service delivery and provide more local levers to manage financial resources. The proposals are summarised as follows:
  - Extending capitalisation flexibilities to include a wider set of eligible costs, in particular general revenue costs.
  - Extending the flexible use of capital receipts to allow authorities to borrow for the revenue costs of invest-to-save projects.
  - Allowing additional flexibilities for the use of the proceeds of selling investment assets.
  - Introducing a reduced interest rate for borrowing from the Public Works Loans Board for invest-to-save projects.
- 1.5 In order to use capital receipts to fund the Transformation Programme, the Council needs to approve a Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy. The Strategy is required to list projects which will make use of the capital receipts flexibility and list the expected savings/service transformations to be delivered. The Strategy should also report the

impact upon the local authority's Prudential Indicators for the forthcoming year and subsequent years.

## 2.0 Qualifying Expenditure

- 2.1 Qualifying expenditure is expenditure on any project that is designed to generate ongoing revenue savings in the delivery of public services and/or transform service delivery to reduce costs and/or transform service delivery in a way that reduces costs or demand for services in future years. It is for individual local authorities to decide whether or not a project qualifies for the flexibility and such decisions will be reviewed by the Council's External Auditor.
- 2.2 The common theme of the Council's Transformation Programme is that it can be used as the catalyst for change internally and externally. The Transformation Programme is known as "Re-imagining Halton" in reference to the principles that will enable the Council to successfully re-design services and deliver a sustainable financial position going forward. Work is being undertaken with members, staff, partners and residents to "re-imagine" how services are delivered.
- 2.4 Saving estimates will be updated on a regular basis over the next year as the programme gathers pace. Changes to future forecasted savings will be reported to Transformation Programme Board during the period of the programme and annual reports will present the level of actual savings made.
- 2.5 The cumulative savings to date and those forecast over the medium term are summarised at Table A, this will be updated over the next year
- 2.6 Savings have been broken down between actual savings against budget, cost reductions and income growth.

**TABLE A – Actual and Estimated Savings**

	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b>Budgeted Savings</b>	0.000	0.099	2.091	3.336	1.215	6.741
<b>Cost Reductions</b>	0.511	0.161	0.166	0.000	0.000	0.838
<b>Income Generation</b>	0.000	0.000	0.066	0.143	0.000	0.209
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.511</b>	<b>0.260</b>	<b>2.323</b>	<b>3.479</b>	<b>1.215</b>	<b>7.788</b>

### 3.0 Qualifying Asset Disposals

- 3.1 For the purposes of the strategy, a qualifying disposal is an asset sale made within the period for which the Strategy applies, by the Council to an entity outside the Council's group structure.
- 3.2 Capital receipts which are to be used by the Council under the flexibilities afforded by the Direction, should be from genuine disposals of assets. Where the Council still retains some control of the assets, directly or indirectly, and retains exposure to the risks and rewards from those assets, the disposal does not give rise to a capital receipt that can be used in accordance with the Direction.

### 4.0 Forecast Costs

- 4.1 A budget for the Transformation Programme delivery resource has been set at £7m over the three year period. The current estimated costs for the programme are shown in the table below.

**TABLE B – Estimated Costs**

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	£m	£m	£m
Programme Running Costs	1.941	2.360	2.427
Allowable Severance Costs	0.382	0	0
<b>Total Transformation Programme Costs</b>	<b>2.323</b>	<b>2.360</b>	<b>2.317</b>

- 4.2 Capital receipts to fund these costs have been identified and will be earmarked to fund future costs.
- 4.3 The impact upon the Council's treasury management prudential indicators is included within the Council's Treasury Management Strategy which is recommended for approval by Council, elsewhere on the Agenda.



**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 25 February 2025

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Director – Finance

**PORTFOLIO:** Corporate Services

**SUBJECT:** Treasury Management Strategy Statement  
2025/26

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To consider the Treasury Management Strategy Statement which incorporates the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Strategy for 2025/26.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION:**

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

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 This Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) details the expected activities of the treasury function in the forthcoming financial year (2025/26). Its production and submission to Council is a requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code.
- 3.2 The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to 'have regard to' the Prudential Code and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.
- 3.3 The Act requires the Council to set out its treasury strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy; this sets out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments.

3.4 Government guidance notes state that authorities can combine the Treasury Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy into one report. The Council has adopted this approach, and the Annual Investment Strategy is therefore included as section 4.

3.5 The Council is also required to produce a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement. There is a formal statement for approval detailed in paragraph 2.3 and the full policy is shown in Appendix A

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The successful delivery of the Strategy will assist the Council in meeting its budget commitments.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Treasury Management can have a major impact on the financial position of the Council. The strategy enables the Council to maximise its financial yield whilst keeping within the principals of security and liquidity as set out in the prudential code.

#### **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 Authority operates its treasury management activity within the approved code of practice and supporting documents. The aim at all times is to operate in an environment where risk is clearly identified and managed. This strategy sets out clear objectives within these guidelines.
- 7.2 Regular monitoring is undertaken during the year and reported on a quarterly basis to the Executive Board.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 8.1 None

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Treasury Management Code states consideration should be given to Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) when considering their counterparties, but this is secondary to the fundamental principals of Security, Liquidity and Yield when considering counterparties.

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

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Working Papers	Financial Management	Matt Guest
CIPFA TM Code	Halton Stadium	
CIPFA Prudential Code		

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**  
**STATEMENT**

**2025/26**

**Revenues and Financial Management Division**  
**Finance Department**  
**January 2025**

## TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2025/26

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the role of treasury management is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low-risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.

The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short term loans, or using longer term cash flow surpluses. On occasion any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.

The contribution the treasury management function makes to the Council is critical, as the balance of debt and investment operations ensure liquidity or the ability to meet spending commitments as they fall due, either on day-to-day revenue or for larger capital projects. The treasury operations will see a balance of the interest costs of debt and the investment income arising from cash deposits affecting the available budget. Since cash balances generally result from reserves and balances, it is paramount to ensure adequate security of the sums invested, as a loss of principal will in effect result in a loss to the General Fund Balance.

CIPFA defines treasury management as:

*"The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."*

#### 1.2 Reporting requirements

##### Capital Strategy

The CIPFA 2021 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes requires all local authorities to prepare, a capital strategy report, which will provide the following:

- a high-level long-term overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services
- an overview of how the associated risk is managed
- the implications for future financial sustainability

The aim of this capital strategy is to ensure that Council fully understand the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.

### **Treasury Management Reporting**

Council is required to receive and approve the following reports each year, which incorporate a variety of policies, estimates and actuals.

**Prudential and treasury indicators and treasury strategy** (this report) - which covers:

- The capital plans (including prudential indicators)
- A minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy - how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time
- The treasury management strategy – how the investment and borrowing are organised, including treasury indicators
- An investment strategy – the parameters of how investments are to be managed

**A mid-year treasury management report** – This will update Members with the progress of the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and whether any policies require revision.

**An annual treasury report** – This provides details of a selection of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates within the strategy.

### **Scrutiny**

The above reports are required to be adequately scrutinised before being recommended to the Council. This role is undertaken by the Executive Board.

**Quarterly Reports** - In addition to the three major reports detailed above, quarterly reporting (end of June/end of December) is also required. However, these additional reports do not have to be reported to Full Council but do require to be adequately scrutinised. This role is undertaken by Executive Board and the reports, specifically, should comprise updated Treasury/Prudential Indicators.

## **1.3 Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26**

The strategy for 2025/26 covers two main areas:

### **Capital issues**

- the capital plans and the prudential indicators
- the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy

### **Treasury Management Issues**

- The current treasury position
- Treasury indicators which limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council
- Prospects for interest rates

- The borrowing strategy
- Policy on borrowing in advance of need
- Debt rescheduling
- The investment strategy
- Creditworthiness policy
- Policy on use of external service providers

These elements cover the requirement of the Local Government Act 2003, the CIPFA Prudential Code, MHCLG MRP Guidance, the CIPFA Treasury Management Code and MHCLG Investment Guidance.

#### **1.4 Training**

The CIPFA Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that Members with responsibility for Treasury Management receive adequate training. This especially applies to Members responsible for scrutiny. Training was last undertaken by Members in February 2018, a further training session has been arranged for February 2025. The training needs of treasury management officers are also reviewed periodically.

#### **1.5 Treasury management consultants**

The Council uses MUFG Corporate Markets (formally Link Asset Services) as its external treasury management advisors.

The Council recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the organisation at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers.

It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and subjected to regular review.

## **2 THE CAPITAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2025/26 – 2027/28**

The Council's capital expenditure plans are the key driver of treasury management activity. The output of the capital expenditure plans is reflected in the prudential indicators, which are designed to assist members' overview and confirm capital expenditure plans.

### **2.1 Capital Expenditure**

This prudential indicator is a summary of the Council's capital expenditure plans, both those agreed previously, and those forming part of this budget cycle.

Table 1 shows planned capital spend by directorate and summarises how these plans are being financed by capital or revenue resources, any shortfall of resources results in the need to borrow.

**Table 1 – Capital Expenditure**

	<b>2023/24 Actual £000</b>	<b>2024/25 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2027/28 Estimate £000</b>
<b>Capital Expenditure:</b>					
Adult Services	1,575	1,925	1,140	1,140	1,140
Childrens Services	3,224	5,578	1,306	-	-
Public Health	-	-	-	-	-
Enviornment and Regeneration	36,740	63,854	25,540	9,007	1,875
Chief Executive	2,663	27,642	41,628	700	700
	<b>44,202</b>	<b>98,999</b>	<b>69,614</b>	<b>10,847</b>	<b>3,715</b>
<b>Financed By:</b>					
Capital receipts	(3,238)	(4,848)	(1,400)	(400)	-
Capital grants	(19,656)	(47,214)	(19,497)	(8,177)	(2,046)
Revenue	(294)	(48)	-	-	-
<b>Net financing need for the year</b>	<b>21,014</b>	<b>46,889</b>	<b>48,717</b>	<b>2,270</b>	<b>1,669</b>

The above financing need excludes other long-term liabilities such as PFI and leasing arrangements which already include borrowing instruments.

## 2.2 The Council's borrowing need – The Capital Financing Requirement

The second prudential indicator is the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is simply the total historic outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources. It is essentially a measure of the Council's underlying borrowing need. Any capital expenditure above, which has not immediately been paid for will increase the CFR.

The CFR does not increase indefinitely as the minimum revenue provision (MRP) is a statutory annual revenue charge which broadly reduces the borrowing need in line with the life of each asset, and so charges the economic consumption of capital assets as they are used.

The CFR includes any other long-term liabilities (e.g. PFI schemes, finance leases). Whilst these increase the CFR, and therefore the Council's borrowing requirement, these types of scheme include a borrowing facility and so the Council is not required to separately borrow for these schemes.



**Table 2 – Capital Financing Requirement**

	<b>2023/24 Actual £000</b>	<b>2024/25 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2027/28 Estimate £000</b>
<b>Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>605,940</b>	<b>640,070</b>	<b>673,042</b>	<b>657,733</b>	<b>640,281</b>
<b>Movement in CFR due to:</b>					
Net financing need for the year	21,014	46,889	48,717	2,270	1,669
PFI / finance leases	-	-	-	-	-
Use of Reserves to reduce MRP liability	(7,744)	(550)	(564)	(578)	(593)
Less Minimum Revenue Provision	(11,410)	(12,209)	(15,181)	(17,001)	(18,528)
<b>Increase / (Decrease) in CFR</b>	<b>1,860</b>	<b>34,130</b>	<b>32,972</b>	<b>(15,309)</b>	<b>(17,452)</b>

### 2.3 Minimum revenue provision (MRP) statement

The Council is required to pay off an element of the accumulated General Fund capital spend each year (the CFR) through a revenue charge called the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

MHCLG regulations require Council to approve an MRP Statement in advance of each year. A variety of options are provided to councils, so long as there is a prudent provision. The full statement is detailed in Appendix A.

The Council is recommended to approve the following MRP Statement.

For capital expenditure incurred before 1 April 2008 the MRP policy will be to follow Option 1 (regulatory method), which will be charged on a 2% straight line basis.

For all unsupported borrowing since 1 April 2008, the MRP policy will be Option 3 (Asset Life Method) and is based on the estimated life of the assets. This will usually be charged using the equal instalment method, but the annuity method may also be used.

One exception to the above is expenditure that the Council has incurred on the construction of the Mersey Gateway Bridge. As this debt will be repaid from future toll income the Council will not charge any MRP on this expenditure until the income is received. When received, MRP payments will be matched with income received thus having little impact on the Council's revenue budget.

The MRP relating to PFI schemes, finance leases and Mersey Gateway unitary charge payments will be based on the annual lease payment, and will have no direct impact on the Council's revenue budget.

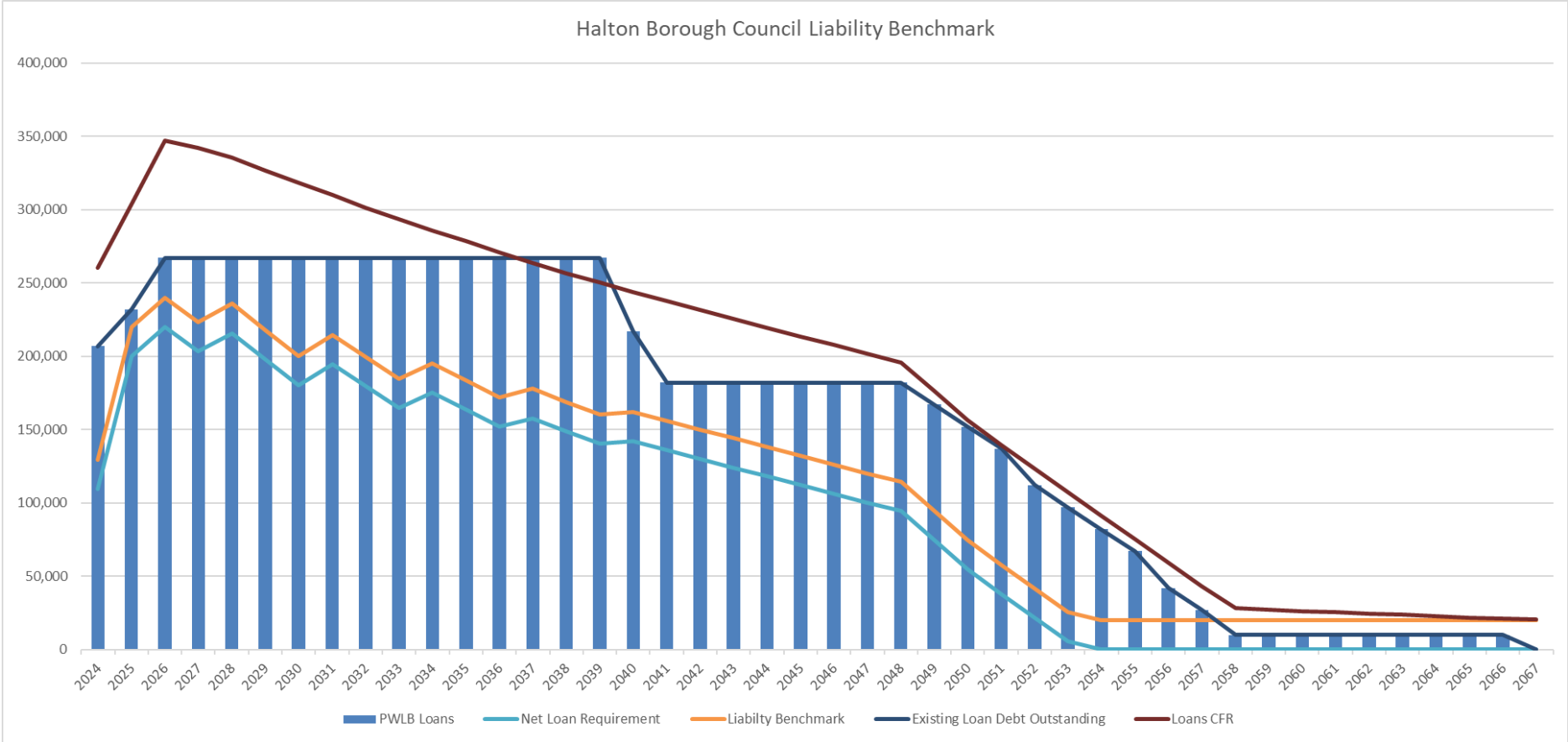
## **2.4 Liability Benchmark**

The Authority is required to estimate and measure the Liability Benchmark (LB) for the forthcoming financial year and the following two financial years, as a minimum, but has decided to show the full debt maturity profile, up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2067. See Chart A

There are four components to the LB: -

1. Existing loan debt outstanding: the Council's existing loans that are still outstanding in future years.
2. Loans CFR: this is calculated in accordance with the loans CFR definition in the Prudential Code and projected into the future based on approved prudential borrowing and planned MRP.
3. Net loans requirement: this will show the Authority's gross loan debt less treasury management investments at the last financial year-end, projected into the future and based on its approved prudential borrowing, planned MRP and any other major cash flows forecast.
4. Liability benchmark (or gross loans requirement): this equals net loans requirement plus short-term liquidity allowance.

Chart A – Liability Benchmark



## 2.5 Affordability prudential indicators

The previous sections cover the overall capital and control of borrowing prudential indicators, but within this framework prudential indicators are required to assess the affordability of the capital investment plans. These provide an indication of the impact of the capital investment plans on the Council's overall finances.

## 2.6 Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream

This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing net of investment income) against the net revenue stream.

**Table 3 – Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream**

Ratio of finance costs to net revenue stream	2023/24 Actual £000	2024/25 Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000	2027/28 Estimate £000
<b>Council's net budget</b>	<b>140,880</b>	<b>149,496</b>	<b>153,667</b>	<b>158,237</b>	<b>162,834</b>
<b>Finance Costs</b>					
Net interest costs	1,136	2,953	7,002	7,015	7,079
Minimum Revenue Provision	3,468	3,069	5,006	6,420	7,759
	<b>4,604</b>	<b>6,022</b>	<b>12,008</b>	<b>13,435</b>	<b>14,838</b>
	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>

MRP and Interest cost relating to PFI schemes and finance leases have been excluded from the figures above as they have no impact on the revenue budget. Net budget figure for 2025/26 excludes the impact of Exceptional Financial Support.

## 3 BORROWING

The capital expenditure plans set out in Section 2 provide details of the service activity of the Council. The treasury management function ensures that the Council's cash is organised in accordance with the relevant professional codes, so that sufficient cash is available to meet this service activity. This will involve both the organisation of the cash flow and, where capital plans require, the organisation of appropriate borrowing facilities. The strategy covers the relevant treasury / prudential indicators, the current and projected debt positions and the annual investment strategy.

### 3.1 Current portfolio position

The overall treasury management portfolio as at 31 March 2024 and the position as at 31 December 2024 are shown in Table 4 for borrowing and investments.

**Table 4 – Current Portfolio Position**

	31st March 2024		31st December 2024	
	£000	%	£000	%
<b>Treasury Investments</b>				
UK banks and building societies	20,384	22%	8,977	15%
Non-UK banks	5,000	5%	-	0%
Local authorities	56,700	62%	42,000	69%
Money market funds	-	0%	-	0%
Property funds	10,000	11%	10,000	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92,084</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>60,977</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Treasury External Borrowing</b>				
Local authorities	(35,000)	17%	(37,000)	18%
Public Works Loans Board (PWLB)	(172,000)	83%	(172,000)	82%
Other long term borrowing	-	0%	-	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>(207,000)</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(209,000)</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Net treasury investments / (borrowing)</b>	<b>(114,916)</b>		<b>(148,023)</b>	

The Council's treasury portfolio position at 31 March 2024, with forward projections are summarised in Table 5. The table shows the actual external debt (the treasury management operations), against the underlying capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement - CFR), highlighting any over or under borrowing.

Table 5 – External debt

	2023/24 Actual £000	2024/25 Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000	2027/28 Estimate £000
<b>External debt</b>					
<b>Borrowing</b>					
Debt at 1 April	187,000	207,000	232,000	267,000	267,000
Expected change in debt	20,000	25,000	35,000	-	-
<b>Debt at 31 March</b>	<b>207,000</b>	<b>232,000</b>	<b>267,000</b>	<b>267,000</b>	<b>267,000</b>
<b>Other long-term liabilities</b>					
Debt at 1 April	353,355	345,413	336,274	326,099	315,518
Expected change in debt	(7,942)	(9,139)	(10,175)	(10,581)	(11,039)
<b>Debt at 31 March</b>	<b>345,413</b>	<b>336,274</b>	<b>326,099</b>	<b>315,518</b>	<b>304,479</b>
<b>Total external debt at 31 March</b>	<b>552,413</b>	<b>568,274</b>	<b>593,099</b>	<b>582,518</b>	<b>571,479</b>
<b>Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>605,940</b>	<b>640,070</b>	<b>673,042</b>	<b>657,733</b>	<b>640,281</b>
<b>Under / (over) borrowing</b>	<b>53,527</b>	<b>71,796</b>	<b>79,943</b>	<b>75,215</b>	<b>68,802</b>

Within the prudential indicators there are a number of key indicators to ensure that the Council operates its activities within well-defined limits. One of these is that the Council needs to ensure that its gross debt does not (except in the short term) exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2025/26 and the following two financial years.

This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years but ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue purposes.

### 3.2 Treasury Indicators: limits to borrowing activity

#### The operational boundary

This is the limit beyond which external debt is not normally expected to exceed. In most cases, this would be a similar figure to the CFR, but may be lower or higher depending on the levels of actual debt. Please note that £20m cash flow borrowing has been added in addition to the estimated debt levels as shown below.

**Table 6 – Operational Boundary**

	<b>2024/25 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2027/28 Estimate £000</b>
<b>Operational boundary</b>				
Debt	252,000	287,000	287,000	287,000
Other long term liabilities	336,274	326,099	315,518	304,479
<b>Operational boundary</b>	<b>588,274</b>	<b>613,099</b>	<b>602,518</b>	<b>591,479</b>
<b>Total external debt at 31 March</b>	568,274	593,099	582,518	571,479
<b>Estimated headroom</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>20,000</b>

**The authorised limit for external debt**

A further key prudential indicator represents a control on the maximum level of borrowing. This represents a limit beyond which external debt is prohibited. It reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term.

This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003. The Government retains an option to control either the total of all councils' plans, or those of a specific council, although this power has not yet been exercised.

**Table 7 – Authorised Limit**

	<b>2024/25 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2027/28 Estimate £000</b>
<b>Authorised limit</b>				
Capital Financing Requirement	640,070	673,042	657,733	640,281
Contingency	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>660,070</b>	<b>693,042</b>	<b>677,733</b>	<b>660,281</b>
<b>Total external debt at 31 March</b>	568,274	593,099	582,518	571,479
<b>Estimated headroom</b>	<b>91,796</b>	<b>99,943</b>	<b>95,215</b>	<b>88,802</b>

### 3.3 Prospects for Interest Rates

The Council has appointed MUFG Corporate Markets (formally Link Asset Services) as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. Table 8 and supporting narrative gives their central view:

**Table 8 – Interest rate forecast**

	Bank rate %	PWLB borrowing rates % (including certainty rate adjustment)			
		5 year	10 year	25 year	50 year
<b>Mar-25</b>	4.50	4.9	5.1	5.5	5.3
<b>Jun-25</b>	4.25	4.8	5.0	5.4	5.2
<b>Sep-25</b>	4.00	4.6	4.8	5.3	5.1
<b>Dec-25</b>	4.00	4.5	4.8	5.2	5.0
<b>Mar-26</b>	3.75	4.5	4.7	5.1	4.9
<b>Jun-26</b>	3.75	4.4	4.5	5.0	4.8
<b>Sep-26</b>	3.75	4.3	4.5	4.9	4.7
<b>Dec-26</b>	3.50	4.2	4.4	4.8	4.6
<b>Mar-27</b>	3.50	4.1	4.3	4.7	4.5
<b>Jun-27</b>	3.50	4.0	4.2	4.6	4.4
<b>Sep-27</b>	3.50	4.0	4.2	4.5	4.3
<b>Dec-27</b>	3.00	3.9	4.1	4.5	4.3

#### Interest Rates

Interest rates have dropped twice in this financial year, falling from 5.25% to 5.00% in August 2024, and falling further to 4.75% in November 2024.

As shown in the forecast table above, the Bank Rate is expected to drop to 4.5% in March 2025, before falling to a level of 3.00% by December 2027. Additional details are given below.

#### Forecasts for Bank Rate

The forecast reflects a view that the next reduction in Bank Rate will be made in February 2025 and for a pattern to evolve whereby rate cuts are made quarterly and in keeping with the release of the Bank's Quarterly Monetary Policy Reports (February, May, August and November). Although it is predicted that rates will fall below 4%, this will be very much dependent on inflation data in the second half of 2025.



## **Gilt yields / PWLB Rates**

The short to medium part of the yield curve is forecast to remain elevated over the course of the next year, and the degree to which rates moderate will be tied to the arguments for further Bank Rate loosening or otherwise. The longer part of the curve will be impacted by inflation factors also the additional concern that with other major developed economies such as the US and France are looking to run large budget deficits, so there could be a glut of government debt issuance which may increase rates.

The rates could also be impacted by other international factors, such as the re-election of Donald Trump and any impact on international trade, and any geo-political risks in Europe, the Middle East and Asia all of which could impact UK gilt yields.

## **Investment and borrowing rates**

- **Investment returns.**

Short term investment returns (up to three months) are expected to fall from 4.25% in 2024/25, to 3.35% in 2025/26, then to 3.10% in 2026/27.

- **Borrowing for capital expenditure.** The long-term (beyond 10 years), forecast for Bank Rate is 3.00%. As all PWLB certainty rates are currently well above this level so borrowing strategies will need to be reviewed. Better value can generally be obtained at the shorter end of the curve, and shorter dated-fixed local authority to local authority monies should be considered.

### **3.4 Borrowing Strategy**

The Council is still maintaining an under-borrowed position, meaning that the capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves balances and cash flow have been utilised instead, but further borrowing will need to be utilised in the coming months and years.

Due to the level of capital funded from prudential borrowing in recent years, and the reported in year and future year overspends, the Council are expecting to borrow £50m from PWLB before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, and further borrowing will be planned to support the cash flow in 2025/26. This will be borrowed for 1 year only, hoping that long-term borrowing rates will fall over the next 12 months in line with the PWLB rate estimates provided by MUFG Coporate Markets, shown in 3.3. But caution will be adopted with the 2025/26 treasury operations and the Operational Director - Finance will monitor interest rates in financial markets and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances.

Due to the current cash need of the Council, it would not be possible to postpone borrowing due to economic conditions, but will use the duration of the borrowing to reduce the risk of falling or rising short or long-term rates accordingly.

**3.5 Policy on borrowing in advance of need**

The Council will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be within forward approved Capital Financing Requirement estimates and will be considered carefully to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated and that the Council can ensure the security of such funds.

**3.6 Debt Rescheduling**

There are currently no plans to reschedule any of the Council's current borrowing.

## 4 ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

### 4.1 Investment Policy

The Council's investment policy has regard to the following:

- DLUHC's Guidance on Local Government Investments ("the Guidance")
- CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes 2021 ("the Code")
- CIPFA Treasury Management Guidance Notes 2021

The Council's investment priorities will be security first, liquidity second, then yield.

The above guidance from the MHCLG and CIPFA place a high priority on the management of risk. This authority has adopted a prudent approach to managing risk and defines its risk appetite by the following means: -

1. Minimum acceptable **credit criteria** are applied in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties. This also enables diversification and thus avoidance of concentration risk. The key ratings used to monitor counterparties are the short term and long-term ratings.
2. **Other information:** ratings will not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution; it is important to continually assess and monitor the financial sector on both a micro and macro basis and in relation to the economic and political environments in which institutions operate. The assessment will also take account of information that reflects the opinion of the markets. To achieve this consideration the Council will engage with its advisors to maintain a monitor on market pricing such as "credit default swaps" and overlay that information on top of the credit ratings.
3. **Other information sources** used will include the financial press, share price and other such information pertaining to the banking sector in order to establish the most robust scrutiny process on the suitability of potential investment counterparties.
4. The Council has defined the list of **types of investment instruments** that the treasury management team are authorised to use. These are split into specified and non-specified investments, as detailed below:

#### **Specified investments**

These are sterling denominated with maturities up to a maximum of 1 year and include the following:

- Debt Management Agency deposit facility
- UK Government gilts
- Bonds issued by an institution guaranteed by the UK Government
- Term deposits – UK Government
- Term deposits – other local authorities
- Term deposits - banks and building societies
- Certificates of deposit with banks and building societies

- Money market funds (rated AAA)

#### **Non-specified investments**

These are investments that do not meet the specified investment criteria. A variety of investment instruments can be used, subject to the credit quality of the institution:

- Term deposits – UK Government (maturities over 1 year)
  - Term deposits – Other local authorities (maturities over 1 year)
  - Term deposits – Banks and building societies (maturities over 1 year)
  - Certificates of deposit with banks and building societies (maturities over 1 year)
  - Property funds
5. Non-specified investments limit. The Council has determined that it will limit the maximum total exposure to non-specified investments as being 40% of the total investment portfolio at the time of investing.
  6. Lending limits, (amounts and maturity), for each counterparty will be set through applying the creditworthiness policy detailed in 4.2, and the Counterparty Limits detailed in 4.4.
  7. The Council will set a limit for the amount of its investments which are invested for longer than 1 year, (see paragraph 4.4).
  8. Investments will only be placed with counterparties from countries with a specified minimum sovereign rating, (see paragraph 4.3).
  9. The Council has engaged external consultants, (see paragraph 1.5), to provide expert advice on how to optimise an appropriate balance of security, liquidity and yield, given the risk appetite of this authority in the context of the expected level of cash balances and need for liquidity throughout the year.
  10. All investments will be denominated in sterling.
  11. The Council will consider the implications of investment instruments which could result in an adverse movement in the value of the amount invested and resultant charges at the end of the year to the General Fund (IFRS9). Though it should be noted that there is currently a temporary statutory override to allow English local authorities time to adjust their portfolio of all pooled investments and to delay implementation of IFRS 9. This was originally for five years, but then extended for two years, and is due to end 31/03/25. At the current juncture it has not been determined whether a further extension to the over-ride will be agreed by Government.

## **4.2 Creditworthiness Policy**

Council applies the creditworthiness service provided by MUFG Corporate Markets. This service employs a sophisticated modelling approach utilising credit ratings from

the three main credit rating agencies - Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's. The credit ratings of counterparties are supplemented with the following overlays:

- credit watches and credit outlooks from credit ratings agencies
- CDS spreads to give early warning of likely changes in credit ratings
- Sovereign ratings to select counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries

This modelling approach combines credit ratings, credit watches and credit outlooks in a weighted scoring system which is then combined with an overlay of CDS spreads for which the end product is a series of colour coded bands which indicate the relative creditworthiness of counterparties. These colour codes are used by the Council to determine the suggested duration for investments. The Council will therefore use counterparties within the following durational bands:

- Yellow                    5 years
- Purple                    2 years
- Blue                      1 year                    (only applies to nationalised and part nationalised UK Banks)
- Orange                  1 year
- Red                        6 months
- Green                    100 days
- No Colour                May not be used

Typically the minimum credit ratings criteria the Council use will be a Short Term rating (Fitch or equivalent) of F1 and a Long Term rating of BBB. There may be occasions when the counterparty ratings from one rating agency are marginally lower than these ratings but may still be used. In these instances consideration will be given to the whole range of ratings available, or other topical market information, to support their use.

All credit ratings will be monitored whenever new lending takes place. The Council is alerted to changes to ratings of all three agencies through its use of Link's creditworthiness service.

- If a downgrade results in the counterparty / investment scheme no longer meeting the Council's minimum criteria, its further use as a new investment will be withdrawn immediately.
- In addition the Council will be advised of information in movements in credit default swap spreads against the iTraxx benchmark and other market data on a weekly basis. Extreme market movements may result in downgrade of an institution or removal from the Council's lending list.

Sole reliance will not be placed on the use of this external service. In addition the Council will also use market data, market information, and information on any external support for banks to help support its decision making process.

### 4.3 Country Limits

Other than the United Kingdom, the Council has determined that it will only use approved counterparties from countries with a minimum sovereign credit rating of AAA from Fitch or equivalent.

### 4.4 Counterparty Limits for 2025/26

The Council has set the following counterparty limits for 2025/26 and will invest in line with the creditworthiness policy detailed in 4.2.

**Table 11 – Counterparty limits**

	<b>Maximum limit per institution £m</b>
UK Government	40
UK banks/building societies with:	
- Minimum rating of AAA	30
- Minimum rating of AA	25
- Minimum rating of A	20
- Minimum rating of BBB	10
Foreign banks in countries with a sovereign rating of AAA and:	
- Minimum rating of AAA	25
- Minimum rating of AA	20
- Minimum rating of A	10
Money market funds	
- Minimum rating of AAA	20
Local authorities	40
Property fund	10
Note: No more than 25% of the total portfolio will be placed with one institution at the time of investing, except where balances are held for cash-flow purposes	

### 4.5 Investment strategy

Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements and the outlook for short-term interest rates (i.e. rates for investments up to 12 months). Greater returns are usually obtainable by investing for longer periods. The current shape of the yield curve suggests that the risks are relatively balanced between Bank Rate staying higher for longer, if inflation picks up markedly through 2025 post the 30 October 2024 Budget, or it may be cut quicker than expected if the economy stagnates. The economy only grew 0.1% in Q3 2024, but the CPI measure of inflation is now markedly above the 2% target rate set by the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee two to three years forward.

Accordingly, while most cash balances are required in order to manage the ups and downs of cash flow, where cash sums can be identified that could be invested for longer periods, the value to be obtained from longer-term investments will be carefully assessed.

### **Investment return expectations**

Base Rate forecasts for financial year ends (March) are shown below:

- 2024/25 4.50%
- 2025/26 3.75%
- 2026/27 3.50%
- 2027/28 3.00%

### **Investment treasury indicator and limit – Total principal funds invested for greater than 1 year**

These limits are set with regard to the Council's liquidity requirements and to reduce the need for early sale of an investment and are based on the availability of funds after each year-end.

**Table 12 – Maximum principal sums invested over 365 days**

<b>Upper limit for principal sums invested for longer than 1 year</b>	<b>2024/25 £000</b>	<b>2025/26 £000</b>	<b>2026/27 £000</b>	<b>2027/28 £000</b>
Upper limit of principal sums invested for longer than 1 year	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000
Current investments in excess of 1 years outstanding at year-end'	5,000	-	-	-

#### **4.6 Investment rate benchmarking**

The Council will use an investment benchmark produced by Link to assess the investment performance of its investment portfolio of 7 days, 1, 3, 6, 12 months.

#### **4.7 End of year investment report**

At the end of the financial year, the Council will report on its investment activities as part of its Annual Treasury Report

## Minimum Revenue Provision

Capital expenditure is generally expenditure on assets which have a life expectancy of more than one year e.g. buildings, vehicles, machinery etc. It would be impractical to charge the entirety of such expenditure to revenue in the year in which it was incurred therefore such expenditure is spread over several years in order to try to match the years over which such assets benefit the local community through their useful life. The manner of spreading these costs is through an annual Minimum Revenue Provision, which was previously determined under Regulation, and will in future be determined under Guidance.

### Statutory duty

Statutory Instrument 2008 no. 414 s4 lays down that:

- “A local authority shall determine for the current financial year an amount of minimum revenue provision that it considers to be prudent.”
- The above is a substitution for the previous requirement to comply with regulation 28 in S.I. 2003 no. 3146 (as amended).
- There is no requirement to charge MRP where the Capital Financing Requirement is nil or negative at the end of the preceding financial year.
- The share of Housing Revenue Account CFR is not subject to an MRP charge.

### Government Guidance

Along with the above duty, the Government issued guidance which came into force on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008 which requires that a Statement on the Council's policy for its annual MRP should be submitted to the full Council for approval before the start of the financial year to which the provision will relate. This guidance was updated in February 2018.

The Council is legally obliged to “have regard” to the guidance, which is intended to enable a more flexible approach to assessing the amount of annual provision than was required under the previous statutory requirements. The guidance offers four main options under which MRP could be made, with an overriding recommendation that the Council should make prudent provision to redeem its debt liability over a period which is reasonably commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure is estimated to provide benefits. The requirement to ‘have regard’ to the guidance therefore means that: -

1. although four main options are recommended in the guidance, there is no intention to be prescriptive by making these the only methods of charge under which a local authority may consider its MRP to be prudent.
2. it is the responsibility of each authority to decide upon the most appropriate method of making a prudent provision, after having had regard to the guidance.



### **Option 1: Regulatory Method**

Under the previous MRP regulations, MRP was set at a uniform rate of 4% of the adjusted CFR (i.e. adjusted for "Adjustment A") on a reducing balance method (which in effect meant that MRP charges would stretch into infinity). From the 2016/17 financial year the Council changed this to a 2% straight line as the new method:

- will aid forecasting as option 1 MRP will remain unchanged each year and enable the Council to link additional MRP costs to specific assets
- will ensure that option 1 MRP is paid off by 2065. If the reducing balance method was used, there would still be a balance of £5.4m by this date

### **Option 2: Capital Financing Requirement Method**

This is a variation on option 1 which is based upon a charge of 4% of the aggregate CFR without any adjustment for Adjustment A, or certain other factors which were brought into account under the previous statutory MRP calculation. The CFR is the measure of an authority's outstanding debt liability as depicted by their balance sheet.

### **Option 3: Asset Life Method**

This method may be applied to most new capital expenditure, including where desired that which may alternatively continue to be treated under options 1 or 2.

Under this option, it is intended that MRP should be spread over the estimated useful life of either an asset created, or other purpose of the expenditure. There are two useful advantages of this option: -

- longer life assets e.g. freehold land can be charged over a longer period than would arise under options 1 and 2
- no MRP charges need to be made until the financial year after that in which an item of capital expenditure is fully incurred and, in the case of a new asset, comes into service use (this is often referred to as being an 'MRP holiday'). This is not available under options 1 and 2

There are two methods of calculating charges under option 3: -

- a. equal instalment method – equal annual instalments
- b. annuity method – annual payments gradually increase during the life of the asset

### **Option 4: Depreciation Method**

Under this option, MRP charges are to be linked to the useful life of each type of asset using the standard accounting rules for depreciation (but with some exceptions) i.e. this is a more complex approach than option 3.

The same conditions apply regarding the date of completion of the new expenditure as apply under option 3.

### **Date of implementation**

The previous statutory MRP requirements ceased to have effect after the 2006/07 financial year. Transitional arrangements included within the guidance no longer apply for the MRP charge for 2009/10 onwards. Therefore, options 1 and 2 should only be used for Supported Capital Expenditure (SCE). Authorities are however reminded that the DCLG document

remains as guidance and authorities may consider alternative individual MRP approaches, as long as they are consistent with the statutory duty to make a prudent revenue provision.

### **Strategy Adopted for 2025/26 and future years**

In order to determine its MRP for 2025/26 and taking into consideration the available options the Council has applied the following strategy:

- For all capital expenditure incurred before 2009/10 and for all capital expenditure funded via supported borrowing MRP to be calculated using Option 1 – The Regulatory Method, calculated using a 2% straight-line charge.
- For all capital expenditure incurred from 2009/10 financed by prudential borrowing MRP to be calculated using Option 3 the Asset Life Method, with the MRP Holiday option being utilised for assets yet to come into service use.
- For Mersey Gateway expenditure the options above will not be used. The MRP Holiday option will be utilised until the Council receives toll income to repay outstanding capital expenditure. MRP payments will then be matched with income received.
- For credit arrangements such as on-balance sheet leasing arrangements (finance leases), the MRP charge will be equal to the principal element of the annual rental.
- For on balance sheet PFI contracts MRP charge will be equal to the principal element of the annual rental.
- For the unitary payments for the Mersey Gateway, the MRP charge will equal the principal repayment elements of the payments made.
- For assets that have an outstanding balance in the Capital Adjustment Account at the time of disposal, the Council have the option of using the capital receipts raised from the sale to repay the balance. Although this will not affect the MRP charge in year (this will be a direct charge from Capital Receipts Reserve to the Capital Adjustment Account) this will reduce an MRP charge for future years. Please note:
  - If the sale of the asset does not raise sufficient receipts to repay the outstanding balance the council has the option to use the Capital Receipts Reserve to make the charge.
  - If the Council choose not to use the methods detailed above, the MRP should be repaid over a period that is considered prudent.

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 25 February 2025

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Director – Finance

**PORTFOLIO:** Corporate Services

**TITLE:** Capital Strategy 2025/26

**WARDS:** Borough-wide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To consider the Council's Capital Strategy for 2025/26 and recommend it's approval by Council.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Council be recommended to approve the 2025/26 Capital Strategy, as presented in the Appendix.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Prudential and Treasury Management Code of Practice has required since 2019-20 that all councils prepare annually a Capital Strategy, which will provide the following:

- a high-level, long-term overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity will contribute to the provision of services
- an overview of how the associated risk is managed
- the implications for future financial sustainability

3.2 The aim of the Capital Strategy is to ensure that the Council understands the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.

3.3 The Capital Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, found elsewhere on the Agenda, which details the expected activities of the treasury management function and incorporates the Annual Investment Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy for 2025/26.

### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The successful delivery of the Capital Strategy will assist the Council in planning and funding its capital expenditure over the next three years, enabling the Council to use capital expenditure to assist in delivering the Council's priorities and managing the revenue cost implications.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are a number of financial implications discussed, the current capital programme and how it is financed is shown in paragraph 2.3, and details of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), the revenue cost to the capital schemes, is shown in paragraph 4.1.

## **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 This report, along with the Treasury Management Strategy ensure that the Council operates within the guidelines set out in the Prudential Code. The aim at all times is to operate in an environment where risks are clearly identified and managed.

## **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**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Working Papers	Financial Management	Matt Guest
CIPFA TM Code	Halton Stadium	
CIPFA Prudential Code		

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CAPITAL STRATEGY**

**2025/26**

**Revenues and Financial Management Division**  
**Finance Department**  
**January 2025**

**CAPITAL STRATEGY STATEMENT 2024/25****1 Background**

- 1.1 The Capital Strategy gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. It is written in an accessible style to assist understanding of these, sometimes technical, areas.

**2 Capital Expenditure and Financing**

- 2.1 Capital expenditure is where the Council spends money on assets, such as property or vehicles that will be used for more than one year. In local government this includes spending on assets owned by other bodies, and loans and grants to other bodies enabling them to buy assets. The Council has some limited discretion as to what is treated as capital expenditure, for example assets costing below £35,000 are not capitalised and are charged to revenue in year. Further detail on how the Council differentiates between revenue and capital spend is shown in the Capital Guidance included at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 All capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources (Government grants and other contributions), the Council's own resources (revenue, reserves or capital receipts) or debt (borrowing, leasing or Private Finance Initiative).
- 2.3 Capital expenditure and financing for 2023/24 is shown below, along with estimates for 2024/25 and the following three years:

**Table 1 – Capital Expenditure and Funding**

	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>
	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Estimate</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
<b>Capital Expenditure:</b>					
Adult Services	1,575	1,925	1,140	1,140	1,140
Childrens Services	3,224	5,578	1,306	-	-
Public Health	-	-	-	-	-
Enviornment and Regeneration	36,740	63,854	25,540	9,007	1,875
Chief Executive	2,663	27,642	41,628	1,700	700
	<b>44,202</b>	<b>98,999</b>	<b>69,614</b>	<b>11,847</b>	<b>3,715</b>
<b>Financed By:</b>					
Capital receipts	(3,238)	(4,848)	(1,400)	(400)	-
Capital grants	(19,656)	(47,214)	(19,497)	(8,177)	(2,046)
Revenue	(294)	(48)	-	-	-
<b>Net financing need for the year</b>	<b>21,014</b>	<b>46,889</b>	<b>48,717</b>	<b>3,270</b>	<b>1,669</b>

### 3 Governance

- 3.1 The Council maintains a three-year rolling programme of capital schemes (The Capital Programme). A summary of the three-year Capital Programme is included in the Budget Report approved annually by Council. In addition a more detailed capital programme report is approved in June of each year, this contains detail of all known grant funded capital projects.
- 3.2 In line with Finance Standing Orders specific capital schemes are reported throughout the year to Executive Board with a recommendation for Council to subsequently approve. Changes to the Capital Programme during the year are reported quarterly to Council.
- 3.3 Capital project managers must complete a capital project form (Appendix 2) giving details of the financial impact of their capital schemes. The form will be completed in conjunction with Financial Management and will help to evaluate whether capital schemes are fully, correctly and effectively funded, that consideration has been given to contingency costs within the project and known future revenue costs are fully budgeted for. The project form should be included with reports to Executive Board by way of evidencing that the financial implications of schemes have been fully addressed.

### 4 Repayment of Borrowing:

- 4.1 Debt is only a temporary source of finance, since loans and leases must be repaid. This is therefore replaced over time by other financing, usually from revenue which is known as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). Planned MRP payments are shown in the table below:

**Table 2 – Minimum Revenue Provision**

	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>
	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Estimate</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
<b>Minimum Revenue Provision</b>					
General Fund	3,468	3,069	5,006	6,420	7,759
Leases and PFI Schemes	617	628	726	819	911
Mersey Gateway unitary charge	7,325	8,512	9,449	9,762	9,858
<b>Net financing need for the year</b>	<b>11,410</b>	<b>12,209</b>	<b>15,181</b>	<b>17,001</b>	<b>18,528</b>

- 4.2 The table above includes MRP payable for finance leases, PFI schemes and the Mersey Gateway unitary charge. For accounting purposes these schemes are classed as borrowing and the annual payments are split between an interest charge and repayment of borrowing, which is shown as MRP above. It should be noted that leases, PFI schemes and Mersey Gateway unitary repayments have no impact on the Council's General Fund.

The Council's MRP statement is included as an appendix to the Treasury Management Strategy which should be read in conjunction with this report.

## 5 Outstanding Debt – Capital Financing Requirement

- 5.1 The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP. The table below shows the Council's Capital Financing Requirement for 2023/24 and how this is expected to change in 2024/25 and over the following three years.

**Table 3 – Capital Financing Requirement**

	2023/24 Actual £000	2024/25 Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000	2027/28 Estimate £000
<b>Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>605,940</b>	<b>640,070</b>	<b>673,042</b>	<b>657,733</b>	<b>640,281</b>
<b>Movement in CFR due to:</b>					
Net financing need for the year	21,014	46,889	48,717	2,270	1,669
PFI / Finance Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Use of Reserves to reduce MRP liability	(7,744)	(550)	(564)	(578)	(593)
Less Minimum Revenue Provision	(11,410)	(12,209)	(15,181)	(17,001)	(18,528)
<b>Increase / (Decrease) in CFR</b>	<b>1,860</b>	<b>34,130</b>	<b>32,972</b>	<b>(15,309)</b>	<b>(17,452)</b>

## 6 Asset Management

- 6.1 To ensure that capital assets continue to be of long-term use, the Council has an asset management plan in place. This summarises how the Council manages its land and property assets and sets out the Council's strategy to ensure that these assets can make the maximum contribution to achieving the aims and the objectives of the organisation.
- 6.2 The Council's Asset Management Plan comprises a number of sections including the accommodation plans; assets disposal plan and maintenance programme which are presented to the Asset Management Working Group, on a quarterly basis.

## 7 Asset Disposals

- 7.1 When a capital asset is no longer needed, it may be sold so that the proceeds, known as capital receipts, can be spent on new assets or the repayment of debt relating to the asset sold. The level of the Council's capital receipts reserve, the expected sales and planned expenditure is shown in the table below:



**Table 4 – Capital Receipts Reserve**

	<b>2023/24 Actual £000</b>	<b>2024/25 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate £000</b>	<b>2027/28 Estimate £000</b>
<b>Capital Receipts - 1st April</b>	<b>(2,790)</b>	<b>(4,978)</b>	<b>(560)</b>	<b>(25)</b>	<b>(623)</b>
Asset Sales	(13,170)	(981)	(1,429)	(1,576)	(1,405)
Use of Capital Receipts					
- New Capital Expenditure	3,238	4,848	1,400	400	-
- Repayment of debt	7,744	551	564	578	592
<b>Capital Receipts - 31st March</b>	<b>(4,978)</b>	<b>(560)</b>	<b>(25)</b>	<b>(623)</b>	<b>(1,436)</b>

## 8 Treasury Management

- 8.1 Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Council's spending needs, while managing the risks involved. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account. The Council is typically cash rich in the short-term as revenue income is received before it is spent, but cash poor in the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed. The revenue cash surpluses are offset against capital cash shortfalls to reduce overall borrowing.
- 8.2 The Treasury Management Strategy, elsewhere on the Agenda, details all aspects of the Treasury Management function and the associated risks as detailed below.
- Borrowing strategy
  - Investment strategy
  - Capital Financing Requirement
  - Capital Prudential Indicators
  - Treasury Indicators – Operational Boundary and Authorised Limit
  - Prospects for interest rates
  - MRP Policy

## **9 Knowledge and Skills**

9.1 The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions:

- The Operational Director - Finance is a CIPFA qualified accountant with over 35 years' experience in local government finance
- The Operational Director – Economy, Enterprise and Property has over 20 years' experience in Regeneration
- The Treasury Manager is a CIMA qualified accountant with 18 years' experience in local government finance and treasury management.
- The Council ensures all staff receive appropriate training for their roles including formal training and courses to support their development.
- The Council currently employs MUFG Corporate Markets (formally Link Asset Services) to provide treasury management services in order to access specialist skills, advice and resources

## CAPITAL GUIDANCE

### 1. Background & Purpose

- 1.1 The difference between capital and revenue expenditure is by no means simple to establish. In recent years it has become even more difficult, with the increasingly multi-funded and complex nature of many of the Council's services.
- 1.2 There is now an increased focus on the treatment of capital and revenue expenditure from Government and other funding bodies, along with the external auditor who have previously identified and reported upon capital transactions which had been incorrectly categorised. It is therefore essential to ensure the correct accounting treatment of capital and revenue transactions.
- 1.3 This Guidance is intended to clarify the difference between capital and revenue expenditure. It will also assist those involved in managing capital projects or processing capital transactions, to ensure the correct approval, accounting treatment, coding, monitoring, control and funding of capital expenditure.

### 2. Introduction

- 2.1 Capital expenditure is fundamentally different in its nature, funding and methods of control from revenue expenditure. It is therefore important that expenditure is correctly treated in terms of whether it constitutes capital or revenue expenditure and is correctly coded as such within the Agresso system. In addition, both revenue and capital expenditure must be accounted for correctly in order to comply with statutory accounting regulations.

### 3. Capital Definition

- 3.1 All costs must be treated as revenue expenditure, unless it is correct and proper to treat them as capital expenditure.
- 3.2 Capital expenditure is defined as expenditure on the acquisition of an asset (eg. land, property, plant, equipment, vehicles) or expenditure which adds to (rather than merely maintains) the value of an existing asset, or considerably extends the life of the asset. The asset must also provide benefit to the Council for more than one year.
- 3.3 For example, the construction of a Council office building will be treated as capital expenditure. Whereas, the on-going annual running costs for that building (eg. staffing, heating, lighting, contracts, supplies) will be treated as revenue expenditure.

### 4. What Constitutes Capital Expenditure?

- 4.1 In order to be included in the Council's Capital Programme, capital schemes must have a total estimated cost of at least £10,000 in respect of land, property and infrastructure and £5,000 in respect of equipment, plant and vehicles. Schemes having a total cost of less than these values must be treated as revenue expenditure.
- 4.2 Directly attributable costs incurred after a capital scheme has been formally approved in detail by Council, should be treated as capital expenditure.

- 4.3 Preparatory or feasibility costs incurred “prior” to the formal approval of a capital scheme must initially be treated as revenue expenditure, as these costs may prove abortive if the scheme does not ultimately go ahead and so may not ultimately result in the creation of an asset. However, once the scheme has been formally approved and will therefore proceed, the related preparatory or feasibility costs may be treated as part of the capital scheme costs.
- 4.4 The cost of providing an extension to a building should be treated as capital expenditure, as it is likely to increase the value of the building.
- 4.5 Major structural maintenance costs such as re-roofing, re-wiring, re-plumbing, boiler replacement, full window replacement etc., which are considered to considerably extend the life of a property, should also be treated as capital expenditure.
- 4.6 However, day-to-day building maintenance and repair costs such as roof repairs, electrical and plumbing repairs, decorating, building and window repairs must be treated as revenue expenditure.
- 4.7 Individual expenditure transactions of less than £1,000 should usually be treated as revenue expenditure, unless they form part of a larger capital cost which meets the capital definition eg. the balance of capital contract payments, monthly recharges of capital fees, invoices for specific elements of capital works.
- 4.8 Professional fees in respect of Valuers, Highway Engineers, Landscape Architects, and Regeneration staff are considered to add value to the assets they deal with and may therefore be charged to the relevant capital schemes. However, it is important to ensure that sufficient capital allocation exists to fund these costs. All other staffing costs must be treated as revenue expenditure.
- 4.9 Project support and implementation costs such as room hire, printing, hospitality, training, advertising, publicity etc. must be treated as revenue expenditure.
- 4.10 Expenditure on the initial, one-off purchase of computer software may be capitalised as an intangible asset. However, the on-going cost of annual software licences, support contracts, implementation consultancy and system training must be treated as revenue expenditure.
- 4.11 Where capital schemes are part or fully externally funded, the definition of what constitutes capital expenditure applied by the external funding body may differ to that presented in this Guidance and therefore the requirements of the external funding body should take precedence.

## **5. The Council’s Capital Programme**

### **Scheme Approval**

- 5.1 The Council maintains a three year rolling programme of capital schemes (The Capital Programme). A summary of the three year Capital Programme is included in the Budget Report approved annually by Council. In addition a more detailed capital programme report is approved by Executive Board in June of each year, this contains detail of all known grant funded capital projects. In line with Finance Standing Orders specific capital schemes are reported throughout the year to Executive Board with a recommendation for Council to subsequently approve. Proposed new capital starts will be considered and prioritised in the light of the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy, the Asset Management Plan, and delivery of the Council’s corporate priorities.

- 5.2 Reports seeking approval for individual capital schemes should include the following financial information;
- (i) the gross cost of each scheme before any external contributions, reimbursements, or capital grants;
  - (ii) the estimated cashflows over the life of the scheme;
  - (iii) the expected revenue expenditure consequences of the scheme and how these will be funded;
  - (iv) details of any specific funding attributable to the scheme such as from capital grants, external contributions and other reimbursements.
- 5.3 The Operational Director, Finance will ensure that the estimated capital financing costs of the approved Capital Programme are incorporated within the annually set revenue budget.
- 5.4 Once a detailed scheme has been formally approved the designated Project Manager should contact the Revenues and Financial Management Division, providing details of the approval, in order for the appropriate capital accounting codes to be set-up to enable orders to be raised and expenditure incurred against the scheme.

#### **Variations to the Capital Programme**

- 5.5 Variations to the Capital Programme may be addressed by transfers (virements) between capital schemes within the Programme. This must be with the written approval of the Operational Director, Finance, and may only be up to 10% on schemes costing less than £5m or up to £500,000 on schemes costing more than £5m, as set out in the Council's Standing Orders Relating to Finance.
- 5.6 Any variations in excess of £500,000 must be reported for approval by Council. The report should include the reasons for the variation, details of how the variation might be contained or mitigated, revised cost estimates profiled over the life of the scheme, and the impact upon the scheme of the potential cost overrun.

#### **Year-end Carry Forward / Slippage**

- 5.7 Where total expenditure by year-end is less than the total capital allocation approved for a particular capital scheme, due to delays, slippage, or other exceptional circumstances, the Operational Director, Finance may choose to approve the carry forward of allocation into the following financial year. All applications for carry forward, including full details of the circumstances, must be made in writing to the Director - Finance by 31<sup>st</sup> March each year.

### **6. Funding the Capital Programme**

- 6.1 Capital expenditure may be funded from a variety of sources including capital receipts, capital grants, prudential borrowing, and revenue contributions. Director - Finance shall arrange for the financing of the Capital Programme as considered appropriate.

#### **Capital Receipts**

- 6.2 Where capital assets are sold the resulting income is termed capital receipts. Capital receipts can be used to fund additional capital expenditure or to repay outstanding capital financing debt, but they cannot be used for revenue purposes.

#### **Capital Grants**

- 6.3 Capital grants are provided with the specific purpose of funding capital expenditure. This will be stated within the grant conditions and therefore they cannot be used for revenue purposes.

- 6.4 Where funding agencies indicate that capital grants may be utilised for expenditure which does not meet the capital definition or constitute capital expenditure as per Sections 3 and 4 above, then the funding agency should be asked to re-assign part of the capital grant as a revenue grant.

**Prudential Borrowing**

- 6.5 The Council is able to borrow funds from approved external institutions. However, this must be in accordance with the Prudential Borrowing Code of Practice (The Prudential Code).
- 6.6 The fundamental requirements for compliance with the Prudential Code is that the Council must be able to demonstrate that its borrowing is prudent, affordable and sustainable ie. that it is able to repay the annual financing costs (principal and interest) over the life of the loan.

**Revenue Contributions**

- 6.7 The Council may decide to make a contribution from the revenue budget to assist with funding a capital scheme. It is “not” however possible to use capital funding for the purposes of meeting revenue expenditure.

**External Contributions and Reimbursements**

- 6.8 External contributions or reimbursements from partner organisations or other bodies may be received towards the funding of capital schemes.
- 6.9 Where capital schemes are part or fully funded from external funding sources, the “gross” rather than “net” cost of the scheme must be included within the Council’s Capital Programme. All approval limits etc. will then apply to the gross expenditure total for the scheme.
- 6.10 Any external funding should be claimed regularly and as early as possible, in order to minimise the cash flow costs associated with schemes.
- 6.11 Where funding organisations indicate that their contribution may be utilised for expenditure which does not meet the capital definition or constitute capital expenditure as per Sections 3 and 4 above, then the funding organisation should be asked to re-assign part of their contribution as revenue funding.

**7. Capital Expenditure Controls**

- 7.1 Full narrative descriptions must be input on the Agresso system in respect of all capital transactions, to support their correct accounting treatment and to assist with reporting.
- 7.2 In order to ensure that all capital expenditure is correctly treated within the accounts, the Revenues and Financial Management Division will periodically check that all transactions charged to capital schemes meet the definition of capital expenditure outlined above.
- 7.3 Where transactions are identified which do not meet the capital expenditure definition they will be transferred to the revenue account.
- 7.4 All capital expenditure must be incurred in accordance with the Council’s Procurement Standing Orders.

**8. Capital Monitoring and Reporting Requirements**

- 8.1 Comments should be sought from the Operational Director, Finance on all draft reports to Management Team or Members regarding capital proposals, spending and funding.
- 8.2 It is the responsibility of each designated Capital Project Manager to monitor expenditure for their schemes, in order to ensure they remain within the approved Capital Programme allocations.
- 8.3 Where expenditure is anticipated to exceed allocation, Capital Project Managers should liaise with their Finance Officer at the earliest opportunity, in order to agree the corrective action required to bring the scheme back in line with the Capital Programme.
- 8.4 Capital Project Managers are required to provide the Revenues and Financial Management Division with estimated quarterly expenditure profiles for each of their capital schemes, by 31 May each year. Any significant revisions to the profiles should also be notified to the Revenues and Financial Management Division during the year. The profiles will be used to monitor the Capital Programme and to provide quarterly Councilwide reports to Executive Board
- 8.5 The Revenues and Financial Management Division will provide access to appropriate financial reports, to assist Capital Project Managers with monitoring expenditure for each of their capital schemes.

## **9. Accounting for Capital Expenditure**

- 9.1 Where capital expenditure does not increase the value of an asset or considerably extend its life, then at year-end the expenditure will be deemed "impaired" and certified as such by a Valuer. The impaired expenditure will then be charged against the Council's revenue budget.
- 9.2 The Council operates a five year rolling programme of land and property re-valuations, whereby a fifth of the land and property assets are re-valued each year. Changes in valuation arising from this exercise are then reflected in the value of assets held on the Council's balance sheet at year-end.
- 9.3 Changes in the valuation of assets are required by accounting regulations to be recorded and maintained as a historic record for each individual asset. This is to enable revaluations and impairments to be identified and accounted for on an individual asset basis.

## APPENDIX 2

**Capital Project Financial Assessment Form**

Division	
Responsible Officer	
Project Name	
Brief Description of project	
Intended purpose of scheme (eg regeneration, operational, investment, maintenance of asset)	
Outcomes hoped to be achieved	
Projected total cost	
How funded (eg grant, S106, capital receipts, borrowing, revenue, other)	
Value of contingency within project costs	
Ongoing annual revenue costs	
Estimated Life of asset (in years)	
Projected start date	
Projected end date	
Sensitivity analysis (for invest to save schemes)	



**Notes for completion of form**

Responsible Officer	This should be the name of the officer responsible for implementing the project.
Brief description of project	Describe what the capital monies will be spent on e.g. building new commercial property to be rented out to bring in income, purchase nursing home, prepare land for sale etc.
Outcomes hoped to be achieved	describe the reason for the scheme e.g. to retain nursing beds, to generate future revenue savings, to prolong life of existing asset etc.
Projected cost	This should be the total estimated cost to complete the capital project including capitalised salary costs, landscaping the area after completion (if required) and should include a contingency for unexpected costs.
How funded	For each different funding stream state exactly where the funding is coming from and how much e.g. for grants state which grant, for S106 monies state the agreement number, if borrowing state how the borrowing is to be repaid (i.e. cost centre savings will be coming from and over what period), if revenue state cost centre, if other state exactly where funds are coming from i.e area forum (state cost centre), developer - state who. Note that the total of 'how funded' should equal the 'projected cost'.
Ongoing annual revenue costs	e.g if purchasing a nursing home what would be the annual net cost of running the home, if building a new building what would be the costs of utilities, repairs etc.
Estimated life of asset	How long do you think the asset will last. E.g a vehicle may be 5yrs or may be 7 yrs, a building in good repair may be 60yrs. For a capital project to develop land for resale this may not be applicable.
Projected start & end date	When is it proposed the project will commence and if everything goes to plan when is the project expected to be complete so that the building can be used, the land can be sold, savings can be achieved etc.
Sensitivity analysis	This is required only for those schemes where the purpose of the scheme is to generate future income and may require input from your finance officer. You should state how long it would take for the scheme to break given the assumptions you have made, and how long it would take for the scheme to break given if those assumptions where different. Eg. if the scheme was to generate future income from solar energy and you have assumed future income will increase @ 3% per year how long would it take to break even if the increase was only 2% per year, or if it was 4% per year.

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Executive Board
<b>DATE:</b>	25 February 2025
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Director of Finance
<b>PORTFOLIOS:</b>	Corporate Services
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief Renewals
<b>WARD(S):</b>	Borough-wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 amended the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, such that councils may grant discretionary business rates relief to any business ratepayer in any circumstance.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to consider the renewal of discretionary business rate relief for existing registered charities, not-for-profit organisations and Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) who continue to satisfy the appropriate criteria.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That**

- (1) Discretionary business rate relief of 10% be granted for those registered charities and CASC organisations currently in receipt of such relief, for the period of three years commencing 1st April 2026, as listed in the Appendix; and**
- (2) Discretionary business rate relief of 75% be granted for those not-for-profit organisations currently in receipt of such relief (with 60% relief for one organisation as indicated), for the period of three years commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026, as listed in the Appendix.**

## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Council has previously granted discretionary business rate relief to a number of organisations which are registered charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs). The Council currently grants discretionary business rate relief for these organisations for a period of three years.
- 3.2 The organisations automatically receive mandatory 80% business rates relief and the Council funds the full cost of such relief as part of the Liverpool City Region 100% business rates retention pilot scheme.
- 3.3 Not-for-profit organisations are not entitled to mandatory rate relief and therefore the full cost of any discretionary relief granted is funded by the Council.

#### **4.0 LEVEL AND PERIOD OF BUSINESS RATES RELIEF AWARDED**

- 4.1 Given the significant financial challenges and constraints facing the Council, it is proposed to provide 10% discretionary business rate relief for registered charities and CASC organisations, rather than the current 15%. These organisations also receive 80% mandatory rate relief, therefore, they would then meet the remaining 10% of their business rates liability themselves.
- 4.2 For not-for-profit organisations it is proposed to provide 75% discretionary rate relief, rather than the current 90%. The organisations would then meet the remaining 25% of their business rates liability themselves. There is one exception to this where it is proposed to provide the organisation with 60% discretionary rate relief rather than the current 75%.
- 4.3 The Council currently grants discretionary business rate relief to organisations for a three-year period. It is recommended that this practice continues, in order to provide the organisations with certainty in order to assist with their financial planning.
- 4.4 The Council is required to provide the organisations with approximately twelve months' notice of any changes to their discretionary rate relief. Hence, if approved the renewals will apply from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The registered charities, not-for-profit organisations and community amateur sports clubs (CASC) currently in receipt of discretionary rate relief, are listed in the Appendix along with the cost of such relief.
- 5.2 The Council funds 100% of both mandatory and discretionary business rates relief awarded. The total cost of mandatory relief is £377,298.63 per annum and for discretionary relief is £125,595.61 per annum.

#### **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

The organisations for whom discretionary rate relief is granted may engage with one or more of the Council's priorities.

**7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There are none.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are none.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are none.

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

<b>10.1 Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Application forms and supporting evidence	DCBL Stadium, Lower House Lane, Widnes	Louise Bate Business Rates Manager

**APPENDIX**

**Registered Charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs**

These organisations automatically receive 80% mandatory rate relief. The table below presents the cost to the Council in each case of both the 80% mandatory rate relief and awarding 10% discretionary rate relief. The remaining 10% of rates liability would then be met by the organisation themselves.

<b>Liabile Party</b>	<b>Annual Rates Liability</b> <b>£</b>	<b>Cost to the Council of 80% Mandatory Relief</b> <b>£</b>	<b>Cost to the Council of 10% Discretionary Relief</b> <b>£</b>
10th Hough Green Scout & Guide Group	3,393.20	2,539.52	339.32
1st Halton Scout Group	1,122.75	898.20	112.28
1st Moore Scouts	1,185.13	948.10	118.51
1st Weston & Weston Point Scouts	2,020.95	1,616.76	202.10
4th Runcorn Scout Group	2,345.30	1,876.24	234.53
4th Widnes (St Bede's) Scout Group	748.50	598.80	74.85
Age UK – Church Street	4,740.50	3,792.40	474.05
Age UK – Albert Square	7,110.75	5,688.60	711.08
Age Concern Mid Mersey	5,738.50	4,590.80	573.85
Cathy Stankevitch Foundation T/A Resport Uk	6,861.25	5,345.00	686.13
Cathy Stankevitch Foundation T/A Resport Uk	8,233.50	6,586.80	823.35
Cheshire Asbestos Victim Support Group	1,896.20	1,516.96	189.62
Chester Diocesan Board of Finance	57,330.00	45,864.00	5,733.00
Feeding Britain	1,696.60	1,357.28	169.66
Four Estates Ltd – Hillcrest	6,112.75	4,890.20	611.28
Four Estates Ltd – Brook Centre	1,671.65	1,337.32	167.17
Four Estates Ltd – Palacefields Community Centre	10,229.50	8,183.6	1,022.95
Hale Village Hall Management Committee	7,110.75	5,688.6	711.08

<b>Liabile Party</b>	<b>Annual Rates Liability</b>	<b>Cost to the Council of 80% Mandatory Relief</b>	<b>Cost to the Council of 10% Discretionary Relief</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Hale Youth Club	1,235.03	988.02	123.50
Halebank Youth Club	1,422.15	1,137.72	142.22
Mind Halton – Day Centre	1,122.75	898.20	112.28
Halton Carers Centre Ltd	6,736.50	5,389.20	673.65
Halton Community Transport	8,233.50	6,586.80	823.35
Halton Disability Partnership	2,270.45	1,816.36	227.05
Halton District Citizen Advice Bureaux Service	8,483.00	6,786.40	848.30
Halton District Citizen Advice Bureaux Service	6,861.25	5,489.00	686.13
Halton District Citizen Advice Bureaux Service	1,671.65	1,337.32	167.17
Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC - meeting room	1,846.30	1,477.04	184.63
Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC – changing rooms & playing field	9,356.25	7,485.00	935.63
Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC – old changing rooms	2,022.95	1,618.36	202.50
Halton Haven Hospice – 23 Queens Avenue	2,644.70	2,115.76	264.47
Halton Haven Hospice – Barnfield Avenue	30,849.00	24,679.20	3,084.90
Halton Play Council Ltd	14,221.50	11,377.20	1,422.15
Halton & St Helens Voluntary & Community Action	20,084.75	12,185.60	2,008.48
Have A Heart Foundation	11,477.00	9,181.60	1,147.70
Loose	5,489.00	4,391.20	548.90
Norton Priory Museum Trust Ltd – Norton Priory Museum	2,994.00	2,395.20	299.40
Norton Priory Museum Trust Ltd – Walled Garden	8,358.25	6,686.60	835.83
Onward Homes Ltd	1,636.90	1,309.52	163.69
Runcorn Frodsham & District MENCAP Society	1,821.35	1,457.08	182.14
Runcorn And District Foodbank – Runcorn	3,093.80	2,475.04	309.38
Runcorn West District Guide Association	960.58	768.46	96.06
Sandymoor Community Association	5,489.00	4,391.20	548.90
SHAP Ltd	18,338.25	14,670.60	1,833.83
Shetland Rescue	5,489.00	4,391.20	548.90
Stick N Step	3,143.70	2,514.96	314.37

<b>Liabile Party</b>	<b>Annual Rates Liability</b>	<b>Cost to the Council of 80% Mandatory Relief</b>	<b>Cost to the Council of 10% Discretionary Relief</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
St John Ambulance	3,892.20	3,113.76	389.22
St Lukes Scouts & Guides	3,692.60	2,954.08	369.26
The Steve Morgan Foundation	19,585.75	16,668.61	1,958.58
Trustees Of Preston Brook Village Hall	2,944.10	2,355.28	294.41
Trade Training UK	2,495.00	1,996.00	249.50
Vicarage Lodge Pre-School Community Play Group	7,984.00	6,387.20	798.40
Widnes & Runcorn Cancer Support Group	5,489.00	4,391.20	548.90
Widnes Fellowship Centre	2,944.10	2,355.28	294.41
Widnes Gymnastics Academy	7,984.00	6,387.20	798.40
Widnes Gymnastics Academy	13,972.00	11,177.60	1,397.20
Widnes RUFC	15,344.25	12,275.40	1,534.43
Widnes Unit 365 of The Sea Cadet Corps	5,239.50	4,191.60	523.95
Widnes Tennis Club	67,158.00	53,726.40	6,715.80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>475,624.84</b>	<b>377,298.63</b>	<b>47,562.78</b>

### **Not-For-Profit Organisations**

These organisations are not registered charities and therefore do not receive 80% mandatory rate relief. The table below presents the cost to the Council of awarding 75% discretionary rate relief in all but one case. The remaining 25% of the rates liability would then be met by the organisations themselves.

<b>Liabe Party</b>	<b>Annual Rates Liability £</b>	<b>Cost to the Council of 75% Discretionary Relief £</b>
Astmoor Community Nursery Ltd (Acorn Centre)	13,972.00	10,479.00
Bridgewater Motor Boat Club	3,343.30	2,507.48
Gateway Community Ltd	6,861.25	5,145.94
Gentlemen Of Moore RUFC	5,114.75	3,836.06
Halebank Football Club	439.12	329.34
Halton Community Radio	2,345.30	1,758.98
Halton Credit Union Ltd – Halton Lea	12,475.00	9,356.25
Halton Credit Union Ltd – Widnes Road	6,237.50	4,678.13
Hazlehurst Craft Studios CIC – 73 High Street	4,141.70	3,106.28
Hazlehurst Craft Studios CIC – 71 High Street	6,861.25	5,145.94
Kingsway Bike Project	1,322.35	991.76
Pavilions Arena Ltd	6,986.00	5,239.50
Power In Partnership Ltd	1,671.40	1,253.55
Power In Partnership – Royal Avenue	2,594.80	1,946.10
Power in Partnership Ltd – 5 Queens Avenue	1,696.60	1,272.45
Power in Partnership Ltd – 7 Queens Avenue	2,245.50	1,684.13
Runcorn ABC – 206B Halton Lea	4,041.90	3,031.42
Runcorn ABC – 206a Halton Lea	1,996.00	1,497.00
Runcorn Rowing Club	536.43	402.32



Runcorn Sports Club	4,890.20	3,667.65
Runcorn Subscription Bowling Club	1,197.60	898.20
West Bank Boat Club	1,422.15	1,066.61
Weston Rifle & Pistol Club <sup>(1)</sup>	1,621.75	973.05
Widnes Cricket Club	6,112.75	4,584.56
Widnes Rugby League Club Ltd	1,397.20	1,047.90
Widnes Rugby League Club Ltd	2,844.30	2,133.23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>104,368.10</b>	<b>78,032.83</b>

(note 1) receives 60% relief.

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director, Environment and  
Regeneration  
Executive Director, Children's Services

**PORTFOLIO:** Children & Young People

**SUBJECT:** Permission to Consult- Home to School  
Transport for Pupils with Special Educational  
Needs & Disabilities – Key Decision

**WARD(S)** Borough Wide

### 1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report seeks the Executive Board's approval to commence a consultation with stakeholders and partners with a view to determining a new policy on sustainable travel and transport for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

### 2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the Board:**

1. **Note the content of the report;**
2. **approve the commencement of a consultation with stakeholders and partners with regard to implementing a new Home to School and College Travel and Transport Policy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities from September 2025; and**
3. **Confirm that they support the overall process.**

### 3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 In accordance with the DfE Statutory Guidance, provision of assisted home to school transport is for eligible SEND pupils of statutory school age, 5-16 years of age. Halton Borough Council currently provides a transport service to early years children and post 16 SEND students, which falls outside of their statutory duties.

3.2 The number of SEND pupils requiring specialist transport has significantly increased over the past number of years. This is a trend that appears to be replicated in every other local authority across the country. In Halton, as a comparison between 2012 and 2024:-

<b>In Borough Transport</b>		<b>2012</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>% Variation</b>
No of CYP		262	461	199	76%
Overall cost		£ 582,000.00	£1,783,602	£1,201,602	206%
Average cost per CYP		£ 2,221.37	£ 3,868.98	£ 1,647.61	74%

<b>Out of Borough Transport</b>		<b>2012</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>% Variation</b>
No of CYP		37	135	98	265%
Overall cost		£ 281,000.00	£ 1,236,544	£ 955,544	340%
Ave cost per CYP		£ 7,594.59	£ 9,159.59	£ 1,565.00	21%

3.3 The figures above show the increasing cost to the local authority to provide travel, in particular, the number of SEND pupils placed in out of borough provision; an increase of 265%. This is reflective of the current national picture. While average cost per pupil for out of borough contracts has remained relatively stable, there has been a 74% increase in average cost per pupil for in borough routes.

#### 3.4 **Wider Context**

The Delivering Better Value<sup>1</sup> (DBV) programme is currently focused on increasing both provision and resilience in local education systems to allow a transition away from reliance on out of borough education places. Additionally, in the last 12 months 117 resource base places have been authorised in line with the directorates' commitment to increase sufficiency of SEN placements in borough. This will reduce reliance on out of borough placements and the subsequent transport costs.

3.5 There is further work ongoing reviewing current panel processes in borough ensuring robust and cost effective decision making. It is recognised that the majority of the savings in the medium to long term will be saved through having an effective inclusive educational system with the correct services to meet local needs in Halton. This is something at the core of the vision for Halton's SEND services and the primary focus of the DBV programme to be undertaken.

<sup>1</sup> The Delivering Better Value in SEND programme (DBV in SEND) is aiming to support local authorities and their local area partners to improve the delivery of SEND services for children and young people whilst working towards financial sustainability.

However it is acknowledged that this work will take time to embed, and, as such, unlikely to impact on spending in the short term.

**3.6 Current Policy**

A number of elements of current home to school transport provision in Halton are discretionary and could be removed or reduced resulting in significant cost savings. In addition, there are several amendments to statutory services that could achieve further cost savings and/or mitigation.

**3.7 Regional Developments**

Halton are part of the "Power of 9" programme. Alongside 8 of our neighbours, this seeks to provide a regional approach to a number of challenges that local authorities are currently facing of which Home to School Transport being identified as one strand. While this work is in its infancy, project proposals have been put forward. These are; a sharing of intelligence, using a collective bargaining approach to managing rates and uplifts through a regional procurement framework and developing agreed consistencies and alignment in transport policies.

3.8 It is difficult at this stage to ascertain the impact that this work will have on Halton, however work will be ongoing, which may include further cost mitigation opportunities for Halton in the future.

**3.9 Consultation**

It is proposed that the Local Authority consults with parents/carers, educational establishments and other interested parties on revised travel solutions. The consultation would comprise of two parts:

Part A: Flexible travel arrangements and increasing independence

Part B: Reviewing discretionary transport

**Part A: Flexible travel arrangements and increasing independence**

**3.10 Personal Travel Budgets (PTB)**

The purpose of personal budgets is to provide financial assistance to parents or carers to enable them to take responsibility for transporting their child to school. Currently the only form of PTB offered by Halton is the offer of parental mileage, where appropriate. This is with the exception of two families who receive a negotiated amount under specific exceptional circumstances.

3.11 This is offered at 45p per mile per round trip from home to school and return. Currently, parental mileage is offered to 38 families (40 children in total). This form of travel is extremely cost effective when compared with taxi contracts and other methods of transport.

3.12 There are several ways in which setting personal allowance budgets could be achieved and agreement on this would need to be confirmed should personal allowances be used more frequently in the future. Some local authorities have proposed a pricing structure of between £2,000 and £6,000 p.a. be set (which

seeks to incentivise families to take up the offer, yet maintains the maximum annual payment at less than the average cost of a hired contract per pupil) (Halton average in borough spend £3,869; out of borough £9,160).

3.13 Personal allowances can be used in several ways, with parents covering their own direct costs of transporting the child via paying a mileage allowance to parents transporting children to school. Additionally, personal/travel budgets can support parents in making their own taxi arrangements. It has been suggested that parents could secure much better rates than local authorities by dealing directly with taxi companies as individuals rather than through a corporate contract. In addition, this method would mean that only transport used would be paid for.

3.14 There are a number of identified restrictions with the current home to school offer and a move to personal budgets would allow families more flexibility around drop off and pick up schedules, including engagement in clubs and activities outside of core school hours, something the current system does not allow. Similarly, delegating authority to families can allow them to organise transport from separate address in cases of shared custody or other arrangements. Other benefits have been identified through family and friends providing transport, enabling them to have a more consistent and familiar travel experience with their parent or main carer (as opposed to being in a taxi with many different drivers). One neighbouring local authority has recently offered pay for breakfast and after school options (or other childcare options) for their non-SEND child(ren) which enables parents to take their SEND child to school. Other options could be shared travel arrangements with other parents or using the costs towards leasing a car. These options would increase choice and creativity for families to arrange travel that best suits their needs circumstances, while strongly promoting independence. This aligns with Halton Borough Council's corporate priority around supporting greater autonomy and independence.

3.15 It should be acknowledged that some local authorities had not found PTB to have made a significant difference to the reduction in cost of transport, for statutory transport as it had not enabled them to take children out of taxis or commissioned buses in sufficient numbers. A robust communication plan would therefore need to be devised for future roll out.

3.16 Promoting Personal Budgets for statutory travel aged children could realise saving of between £285k and £849k but this would be determined based on the uptake of families.

### **Escalation of Independent Travel Training**

3.17 Independent Travel Training provides a more cost effective way of supporting the SEND transport operating model (particularly in terms of post 16) but also has much wider strengths based on social inclusion/promoting independence in line with the Preparation for Adulthood agenda. Halton Borough Council offers Independent Travel Training, however service discussions have identified that this could be much improved and uptake increased.

3.18 Halton's current policy explicitly references the expectation of engagement with independent travel training from Year 8 plus for children and young people who are assessed through EHC Annual Review processes to achieve this skill, leading to positive outcomes: *"As part of the review process, young people in Year 8 onwards identified as being suitable, will be expected to be considered for Independent Travel Training"*.

3.19 S153 of DfE's statutory guidance states *'local authorities must not withdraw free home to school travel from an eligible child if a parent does not consent to them participating in independent travel training'*.

3.20 Independent Travel Training will now form part of the annual review conversation with children and families encouraged to engage where applicable, as a commitment to promoting and supporting independence, where possible. The consultation will aim to gain insight into other potential challenges or opportunities regarding uptake of Independent Travel Training.

3.21 Although at initial glance, the cost of delivering this initiative will outweigh the levels of savings that might be achieved from the provision of transport as it requires significant 1:1 contact time. The significant benefits, though hard to quantify financially, will come in later years delivering compound savings to children's and adult social care budgets as these children develop essential life skills for the future.

### **Centralised Pick ups**

3.22 As an alternative to fully independent travel, the offer of assisted travel could be to collect from a central pick up point as opposed to home addresses. This is permitted within the DfE statutory guidance and can be considered for capable pupils. This has the advantages of speeding up routes and therefore the potential for an increased number of pupils to be carried on minibus routes. Additionally, there have been several requests for uplifts from transport companies due to time taken to complete routes. Introducing pick up points for pupils will assist with speeding up routes, and reduce uplifted costs to transport companies. Reducing the externally contracted vehicle by 5% through introducing centralised pick up points could realise a potential saving of £142,000, however any actual saving would need to be reviewed following consultation.

3.23 More importantly this is a significant step for the pupil towards independent travel and may also motivate children and families to engage with the independent travel training programme on offer in Halton.

### **Motability Vehicles**

3.24 A long debated issue is the family's utilisation of their own Motability cars. There have been many conversations between LA's and the DfE around this matter. DfE have been very clear when stating the law that mobility cars can't be taken into account when assessing a young person's transport eligibility. However, where a young person has a mobility car assigned for their purpose, in law on the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday the vehicle officially becomes theirs. Other LA's are now taking a tougher stance on provision of transport once the student

reaches the age of 18, in line with DfE guidance. Consultation would allow us to explore this further with children and families in Halton.

## **Part B: Reviewing discretionary transport**

### **Distance Criteria**

- 3.25 To qualify for travel assistance, a pupil's distance from home to school should be more than three miles if over eight years of age or two miles if under 8 *or if meeting the low income criteria*. There are some cases where the Local Authority provides transport for SEND pupils who do not meet the distance criteria i.e. under distance but granted based on other eligibility grounds such as medical, level of disability or exceptional circumstances as set out in the current SEND Transport Policy. We do not currently routinely review children transitioning at this stage, however one approach moving forward could be to set up a tracker to highlight 8<sup>th</sup> birthday and send a re-referral form to reapply for transport.

- 3.26 Looking at the current cohort of children, around a third of children currently receiving transport would not be eligible under additional grounds. Therefore, potential savings of £174,000 could be realised from the current cohort and/or cost mitigation for new cohorts.

### **Provision of transport for pupils under the age of 5 years**

- 3.27 Halton currently provides transport for pupils under the age of 5 years i.e. in reception classes, which we are not statutorily required to offer. Halton Borough Council do not current ask for a contribution towards transport costs.

- 3.28 The removal of this provision may have a disproportionate impact on children with complex needs and/or disabilities so it is proposed several areas are explored:

1: Halton Borough Council to continue to provide free home to school transport to an infant or primary school for a child under the age of five, where a child is likely to be deemed as eligible once they turn five years of age.

2: Halton Borough Council to continue to provide free home to school transport to an infant or primary school for a child under the age of five, where a child is likely to be deemed as eligible once they turn five years of age.

Students will be expected to travel by the most cost-effective means for which they are able which may be public transport, PTB or by way of a seat on a contract vehicle (coach, minibus or taxi) at the start and end of the normal school day. The provision of a travel allowance where the parent, carer or young person uses a contract vehicle will only be agreed where this is the least expensive option. This could realise a saving of up to £55,000, for the current cohort and/or cost mitigation for new cohorts.

3: Halton Borough Council will continue to provide free home to school transport to an infant or primary school for a child under the age of five, where a child is likely to be deemed as eligible once they turn five years of age but

request an annual/termly contribution. This would be similar to the annual charge in place for post 16 students. Using the current average charge across 25 comparative local authorities (£750 and £500 for low income), this could realise a saving of £15,800 for the current cohort and/or cost mitigation for new cohorts.

4: Halton Borough Council will cease to provide free home to school transport to an infant or primary school for a child under the age of five, where a child is likely to be deemed as eligible once they turn five years of age. This could realise a saving of £147,000 for the current cohort and/or cost mitigation for new cohorts.

### **Post 16 Transport**

3.29 There is no automatic entitlement to transport for those of sixth form age in the same way there is for 'eligible' children of compulsory school age, however local authorities have a discretion to assist with transport arrangements and are expected to target support towards students in particular circumstances (such as those with SEN or from low income families) taking into full consideration duties under the Equality Act 2010.

3.30 Halton Borough Council currently do offer transport for children with SEND over the age of 16. Currently door to door transport is provided for 64 pupils, with a yearly cost of £632K.

3.31 In 2017 a charge for Post 16 SEND transport was introduced at £370 per academic year (£250 for low income families). This currently totals £19.6K annually in contribution charges against a spend of approximately £632K per year; equating to 3.1% of the overall spend. Halton's charge is one of the lowest in the country, the average current charge of 25 LA's surveyed is £752.74 per year.

3.32 The removal of this provision may have a disproportionate impact on children with complex needs and/or disabilities, so it is proposed several possibilities are explored:

1 Increase Halton Borough Council's termly charge in line with other LA's (Average of £750/£500 low income). This could realise a saving of £44,850 for the current cohort and/or cost mitigation for new cohorts.

2: Halton Borough Council will continue to provide home to school/college travel assistance for young people ages 16-18 who meet the eligibility criteria under our existing policies.

Students will be expected to travel by the most cost-effective means for which they are able which may be public transport, PTB or by way of a seat on a contract vehicle (coach, minibus or taxi) at the start and end of the normal school day. The provision of a travel allowance where the parent, carer or young person uses a contract vehicle will only be agreed where this is the least expensive option.



3. In line with statutory responsibilities, Halton Borough Council will cease to provide ordinarily home to school/college travel assistance for young people ages 16 -18.

**3.33 Governance Changes**

It has been recognised that a review of governance structures as part of this project would be beneficial at this stage. This will support the day to day decision making around home to school transport and also support the scale and pace that will be necessary to implement the changes proposed within the report. The reviewed structure will provide oversight, challenge and accountability for the delivery and spend within this area. While the new structure has yet to be agreed, the new structure being proposed will ensure that the Local Authority delivers services that meet the needs of children and families in a sustainable way, adapts to social and economic changes and offers effective monitoring around future home to school transport spending.

**4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 All of the above will require an amendment to the current “Home to School and College Travel and Transport Policy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)”

**5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 As detailed above, there are considerable potential budgetary savings from the identified proposals. This may be through one or a combination of the above proposals.

5.2 Failure to achieve any of the above will have a negative impact on the Council budget for provision of home to school transport for children with SEND.

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

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

Changes in this policy will encourage an increase in promoting wellbeing though encouraging a reduction in overreliance on transport and promote the use of walking and cycling to school, where applicable. For example, a personal budget could be used to buy bikes for children and carers to travel to school. Where children can use active travel options including public transport, walking and cycling key health benefits are achieved.

In addition, a key feature of the policy change will be to encourage greater independence both in childhood and into adulthood by increasing focus on independent travel training.

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

None.

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

Provision of assisted home to school transport enables children and young people with SEND to travel to appropriate schools where they have been placed and where their specialist needs are catered for.

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

Halton's current charging structure for post 16 contributions offers a reduction for those on a low income. A universal increase in charges would disproportionately impact on lower income families. Other mitigations against increased charges also exist such as 16-19 bursary which is accessible to students on a low income. Halton currently have a lower contribution rate for low income families.

**6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future**

Where children can use active travel options including walking and cycling key environmental benefits are achieved. Public transport and active travel modes provide alternative sustainable options to private forms of transport which is conducive to lowering harmful emissions.

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

None.

**7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Depending on the exact nature and impact of the policy changes, particularly in relation non-statutory functions, changes may be contentious. While this move has been undertaken by several local authorities, the move has been viewed as unpopular when seen in isolation as it risks being seen purely as a cost cutting exercise. It is also very difficult to simply remove something that people are used to having in place, even more so when some policies have historically been relatively generous. It is likely that removal of transport is likely to be more palatable if genuine alternatives to directly provided support are offered as outlined in the consultation, reducing the risk of reputational damage to the council.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Given the nature of the proposed changes, there is an impact to those defined by both age and disability. A full impact assessment is currently under review and will be referenced as part of this paper.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Public transport and active travel modes provide alternative sustainable options to private forms of transport which is conducive to lowering harmful emissions.

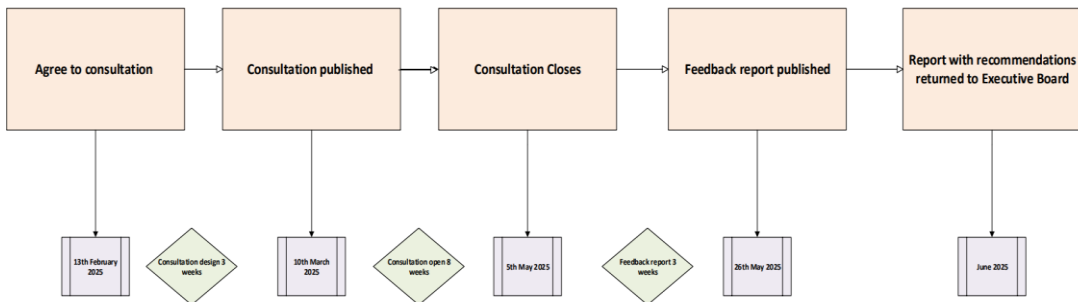
**10.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION**

The report seeks the Executive Board’s approval to commence a consultation with stakeholders and partners with a view to determining a new policy on sustainable travel and transport for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The outcome of changes following consultation could result in significant saving for the council and be significant in terms of its effects on children with SEN accessing Home to School Transport.

**11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

The alternative option would be to not consult on Home to School Transport provision and continue with the current policy.

**12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE**



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

‘None under the meaning of the Act.’

**EQUALITY IMPACT  
ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE**

Equality and Diversity UK Ltd

### **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Template**

The Equality Act 2010 has outlined Protected Characteristics as covering: **Race, Disability, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Gender reassignment, Maternity and Pregnancy and Age.**

Protected Groups refers to people who share a protected characteristic. The General Equality Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.**
- **Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**
- **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

Undertaking an EIA helps organisations comply with the General Equality Duty as it involves proactively considering the three aims of the Duty as part of the decision making process.

This involves considering how organisations act as employers; how they develop, evaluate and review policy; how they design, deliver, and evaluate services, and how they commission and procure services from others.

---

## Policy/Procedure/Function Details

<b>Name of Policy/Procedure/Function* - Home to School/College Travel and Transport Policy</b>	
<b>EIA Carried out by:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	21/10/2024
<b>Equality and Diversity Coordinator: (QA)</b>	Liz Morton
<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Head of Department:</b>	Charlotte Finch
<b>Date:</b>	21/10/2024
<b>Date Passed to Governance Services Unit:</b>	This is a draft document currently under review. Full impact assessment to be published following stakeholder engagement. This EIA will be updated with the outcomes from that work and engagement with stakeholders (including public consultation) to enable reassessment and for it to be represented as part of the decision-making process.

\*In this template the term 'policy' is used as shorthand for what needs to be equality impact assessed. Policy needs to be understood broadly to embrace the full range of policies, practices, activities and decisions: essentially everything we do, whether it is formally written down or whether it is informal custom and practice. This includes existing policies and any new policies under development.

---

DRAFT

**Section 1 – Initial EIA - to be completed for all policies**

<p>A.</p>	<p>What is the purpose of this policy. Consider explicit and implicit aims</p>	<p>Halton Borough Council have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 (as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006) and associated regulations and guidance, to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made, where necessary, to facilitate a child’s attendance at school. The desired outcomes are that available school transport services reflect the Acts of Parliament concerned and that those students entitled to free travel under the arrangements currently stipulated use the services provided.</p> <p>Schedule 35B of the Education Act (1996) defines eligible children as those categories of children of compulsory school age (5-16) in an authority’s area. Halton Borough Council’s current Home to School Transport Policy set out provision for both statutory and non-statutory services.</p> <p>A <b>statutory</b> service is provided where an application meets the legal criteria to access services.</p> <p><b>Non statutory</b> services reflect the discretion the council considers.</p> <p>Examples of that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children under 5 years of age who are accessing a nursery provision within an all age setting and are on the School roll</li> <li>- Parental disability</li> <li>- Post 16 travel</li> <li>- Discretionary applications on a case by case basis.</li> </ul> <p>The overall cost to the Council of the provision of home to school travel is significant and rising. The current EIA has been devised to accompany an options paper that will be presented through service and corporate governance structures that detail the opportunities to reduce costs of these services. The current policy makes provision for eligibility above and beyond statutory requirements that have associated costs, and several of the options presented provide an opportunity to review these ‘discretionary’ elements. The potential changes to the scheme would provide a contribution to savings the Council is having to find in response to budgetary pressures alongside a focus on obtaining skills that facilitates pupil’s independence and support transition to adulthood.</p> <p>The current to the Home to School/College Travel and Transport Policy is set out in three parts as follows:</p>
-----------	--	---



		<p>Part A – Travel support to access education for children and young people of age 16 and under.  Part B – Travel support to access education/training for young people Post 16  Part C – Application, Review, and Appeals processes</p> <p>The current paper sets out options for possible amendments to the current policy that may reflect changes in Part A, B and C of the policy.</p> <p><b>The options explored within the paper are:</b></p> <p><b>Option 1- Introduce and Promote Personal Budgets for statutory travel aged children</b>  <b>Option 2- Review and track children turning 8 and apply change of distance criteria</b>  <b>Option 3- Review provision of transport for pupils under the age of 5 years</b>  <b>Option 4- Review provision of transport for pupils post 16</b>  <b>Option 5- Escalation of Independent Travel Training</b>  <b>Option 6- Central Pick ups</b>  <b>Option 7 – Motability Vehicles</b></p>
B.	<p>Does the policy have an impact on staff or the wider community that the organisation has links with? <b>Please give details</b></p>	<p>Stakeholders who may be affected from options presented include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children and young people of statutory school age</li> <li>- Children and young people of non-statutory school age</li> <li>- Parents/carers</li> <li>- Schools and colleges</li> <li>- Early Years settings</li> <li>- Transport providers</li> </ul> <p>Some proposals may impact on individuals with protected characteristics. The EIA is necessary to understand any potential impact and necessary mitigation that is required.</p>
C	<p>What results/outcomes are intended? How are these measured? What factors could contribute or detract from the outcome?</p>	<p>Nationally, local authorities are facing increased pressure on Home to School Travel budgets. Halton has seen a increase both in terms of the number of children with EHCP’s accessing transport alongside an increase in costs associated with procuring transport contracts, and the council acknowledge that pressure will continue to increase in future. This has prompted a review of the to the Home to School/College Travel and Transport Policy, in order to identify opportunities to manage demand and pressures on the service.</p>

D	Is there is any evidence that the policy relates to an area with known inequalities? <b>Please give details</b>	The Home to School/College Travel and Transport Policy relates children with SEND needs including neurodiversity needs, physical and cognitive disabilities alongside complex health needs.		
E	Will/Does the implementation of the policy result in different impacts for protected groups and the general population of the organisation?	The children and young people who may be more greatly impacted by the presented options are those of non-compulsory school age who are currently accessing non statutory transport, should this offer not be available in the future.		
		Yes	No	Explain your reasons
	Disability	x		
	Sexual Orientation		x	
	Sex	x		
	Gender Reassignment		x	
	Race		x	
	Marriage/Civil Partnership		x	
	Maternity/Pregnancy		x	
	Age	x		
	Religion or Belief		x	
	Others groups identified: i.e. socio economic status; neurodiversity etc			As above

---

If you have answered 'Yes' to any of the questions, then you are required to carry out a full Equality Impact Assessment – please go to section 2

DRAFT

Section 1: Result of initial Equality Impact Assessment

The above-named policy has been considered and does not require a full equality analysis	
<b>Initial EIA Carried out by:</b>	<u>Does require full assessment</u>
<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Agreed by: Equality and Diversity Coordinator: (QA)</b>	<u>Does require full assessment</u>
<b>Date:</b>	

Section 2 – Full Equality Impact Assessment

1a. Does the policy impact differently on people from any of the Protected Groups?				
	Negative Impact	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Please describe the impact for each of the protected groups and outline the evidence for your conclusion
Disability	X		X	<p>The Home to School Transport policy has specific entitlement to transport for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.</p> <p>The current policy has a specific criteria for transport support in relation to children of parents who cannot accompany their children due to temporary or permanent illness or disability. Retention of this clause is likely to have positive impact on parents and carers with disabilities.</p> <p>In relation to escalation of <b>Independent Travel Training</b>, this is likely to have a positive impact on children to increase independence and community connections and health benefits where walking/cycling is involved. It is noted that there may be a disproportionate negative impact where future approaches fail to consider individual disability needs'. It is reasonable to ask parents and young people to consider travel training, but this should not be a blanket policy. It should be based on individual assessment and tailored to the young person's needs, and some young people may never manage independent or supported travel by public transport.</p> <p>This is similar to the <b>centralised pick up</b> approach which, for children with disabilities that affects them from accessing pick up points independently, presents additional challenges. Local authorities now expect parents to take children to pick up points instead of collecting children from home, which does fall within legislation, however local authorities have a duty to provide 'non-stressful' transport arrangements. Therefore any requests must be within a safe walking route within a reasonable walking distance from home.</p>

Sexual Orientation				It is not anticipated that there will be an impact on residents depending on their sexual orientation. This data is not collected for pupils and therefore cannot be commented upon further.
Sex	x			<p>Gender is not a distinguishing factor in the application process or the allocation of school transport. There should be no greater impact on this group than on any other. It is noted that there is generally a small overrepresentation of boys with SEN generally so impacts may have a marginal disproportionate impact on males.</p> <p>In terms of parents/carers there may be an adverse impact women more than men. This is largely due to the fact that women are often the main carer for children/young people so may be impacted from options presented in the paper.</p>
Gender Reassignment				It is not anticipated that there will be an impact on residents depending on their gender reassignment. This data is not collected for pupils and therefore cannot be commented upon further.
Race				Race is not a distinguishing factor in the application process or the allocation of school transport. There should be no greater impact on this group than on any other.
Marriage and Civil Partnership				It is not anticipated that there will be an impact on residents depending on their marriage/civil partnership. This data is not collected for pupils and therefore cannot be commented upon further.
Maternity/ Pregnancy				It is not anticipated that there will be an impact on residents depending on maternity/pregnancy. This data is not collected for pupils and therefore cannot be commented upon further.
Religion or Belief				Personal circumstances will be considered during the assessment process however it is not anticipated that there will be an impact on residents based on their religion or belief.
Age				<p>As this proposal considers a specific age group, the Protected Characteristic of Age is impacted. There is likely to be a disproportionate direct impact on early years students and on 16–18-year-old SEND learners.</p> <p><b>Early Years (pupils under the age of 5 years).</b> While there is no legal obligation to provide free transport for this age group, a blanket refusal could potentially be considered discriminatory (for example, if a four year-old attends a special school some distance from home and could not access education without transport). Additionally, there may be children with identified SEND under 5 years of age in nursery settings, that might</p>

			<p>have high levels of absence without transport while waiting to turn statutory age. This may impact on early identification of needs and support. Given the importance in early intervention, this may result in need for high cost interventions later on in their education.</p> <p><b>Provision of transport for pupils post 16.</b> While there is no legal obligation to provide free transport for this age group, a change in provision for post 16 children may result in them not engaging in further education, increasing Halton’s NEET cohort. This may disproportionately affect children both educationally and socially, with national data highlighting that young people with SEND are generally less likely to achieve qualifications and more likely to be NEET (not in education, employment or training)<sup>1</sup>. Halton has experienced a rise in Post 16 NEET numbers for children with an EHCP in 2023 and anecdotally a further growth is likely in 2024. Lack of transport/travel opportunities for provision that may further impact on these figures as specialist provision is more likely to require further to travel and travel out of borough.</p> <p>In terms of <b>enforcing use of Motability Vehicles</b> when a young person turns 18 is likely to have a neutral impact, as the children and young people are already benefitting from a Motability vehicle and should therefore have limited difficulty accessing education.</p>
Socio economic status			<p>Halton’s current charging structure for <b>post 16 contributions</b> offers a reduction for those on a low income. As one option presented considers an increase in contributions, families of children on lower incomes would be affected differently than those on higher levels of income. A universal increase in charges will disproportionately impact on lower income families. Other mitigations against increased charges also exist such as 16-19 bursary which is accessible to students on a low income.</p> <p>Removal of discretionary services may have a high impact for a minority of students either living in remote areas with no access to either public bus services or private transport, or on low income and unable to afford daily fares.</p> <p>The option to promote <b>personal budgets</b> for all statutory school aged children would be by consent. Therefore it is likely to have a neutral impact. Children and families who will benefit from the more flexible system will access personal budgets and for those who won’t, there will be the option to continue to avail of transport. There is an option to review mileage rates with the potential introduction of banding</p>

<sup>1</sup> [Resource 1 Careers Landscape Factsheet-Final - v1.pdf](#)

				arrangements for personal travel budgets to ensure that they are an attractive option to parents, including those with low incomes.
Other impacted groups i.e., neurodiversity				The full impact on vulnerable groups is not yet known and will be an ongoing process throughout decision making and in line with further stakeholder consultation. The SEND code of practice makes specific provision for children from families in the armed forces as well as other vulnerable groups including children in care and children in the youth justice system. Future decisions and action plans will need to consider and mitigate against impacts on these groups.

DRAFT



General Duty

<p><b>1b. Now consider and detail below how the policy impacts on elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advances the equality of opportunity and promotes good relations between groups.</b> Where there is evidence, address each protected characteristic (Disability, Sexual Orientation, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Marriage/Civil Partnership, Maternity/Pregnancy, age, Religion and Belief)</p>	
<p><b>Eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation</b></p>	<p>No evidence</p>
<p><b>Advance equality of opportunity</b></p>	<p>No evidence</p>
<p><b>Promote good relations between groups</b></p>	<p>Any change to a home to school transport policy will possibly to be viewed negatively, particularly as we engage around options that may include discharge of non-statutory duties or an increased contribution from parents around post 16 SEND transport.</p> <p>The potential changes to the policy are likely to lead to concern from parents and carers with children in early years and post 16 settings, particularly those with more than one child availing of transport. This highlights the need for robust engagement with families and stakeholders through future public consultation. Alongside this it will be important to engage with the Halton Parent Carer Forum on an ongoing basis.</p>

2. Engagement and Involvement

---

<p>How have you engaged stakeholders in gathering evidence?</p>	<p>Consultation has been requested from Halton Borough's Council's D&amp;N group and feedback will be incorporated into assessment.</p> <p>Future steps will require a public consultation and engagement with Halton Parent Carer Forum.</p>
<p>Have you engaged stakeholders in consulting on the policy proposals?</p>	<p>This is a draft document and the full and final document will include feedback from stakeholders</p>
<p>For each engagement activity, please state who was involved, how and when they were engaged, and the key concerns/issues identified.</p>	<p>As above.</p>

3. Action Plan

The following action plan should be completed if the EIA exercise has identified that additional steps need to be taken to address adverse outcomes for particular protected groups, maximise positive impact or to collect additional evidence to inform the EIA.

Action	Target Date for Completion	Person Responsible	Outcome

---


DRAFT

4. Making a decision

An EIA has been undertaken on this policy and meets the requirements of the General Equality Duty. The following decision has been taken: (please tick one box)

	<p><b>Approve – No major change</b></p>	<p>Your analysis demonstrates that the policy is robust, and the evidence shows no potential for discrimination and that you have taken all appropriate opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations between groups.</p>
	<p><b>Adjust the policy</b></p>	<p>This involves taking steps to remove barriers or to better advance equality.  It can mean introducing measures to mitigate the potential effect.  This should be done before the policy is implemented.  Where this cannot happen the action plan must outline</p>
	<p><b>Continue with the policy</b></p>	<p>This means adopting your proposals, despite any adverse effect or missed opportunities to advance equality, provided you have satisfied yourself that it does not unlawfully discriminate.  In cases where you believe discrimination is not unlawful because it is objectively justified, it is particularly important that you record what the objective justification is for continuing the policy, and how you reached this</p>
		<p>decision.</p>

<p><b>Stop and remove the policy</b></p>	<p>If there are adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated, you will want to consider stopping the policy altogether.</p> <p>If a policy shows unlawful discrimination it <b>must</b> be removed or changed.</p>
--	--

5. Sign off and review:

When the actions listed above have been completed a copy of this form should be sent to Equality and Diversity Coordinator.

<p><b>Full EIA Carried out by:</b></p>	
<p><b>Date:</b></p>	
<p><b>Equality and Diversity Coordinator: (QA)</b></p>	
<p><b>Date:</b></p>	
<p><b>Manager:</b></p>	
<p><b>Date:</b></p>	

---

**Date Passed to Governors/Directors:**

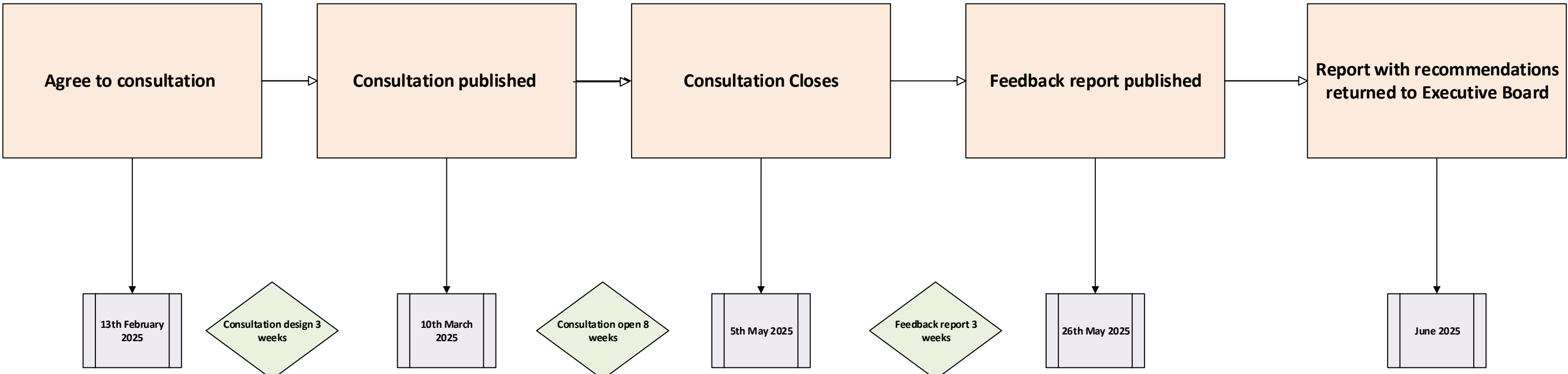
Review Date

Unless the policy is reviewed before the date below, the next EIA will be carried out in

.....

(A maximum of 3 years from date of completion as shown on this template)

DRAFT





**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 25 February 2025

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director Adults

**PORTFOLIO:** Adult Social Care

**SUBJECT:** Support at Home service in Halton – British Red Cross

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To consider the Support at Home service in Halton, contracted with British Red Cross, and consider contract renewal, through a direct award, for a further three years following the current contract end date.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1) Note the contents of the report; and**
- 2) Approve a Waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 iv of part 3 of Procurement Standing Orders, for a direct award to support the continuation of the provision of the Support at Home service in Halton delivered through contract with British red Cross for the period from 1st April 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2028.**

**3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**3.1 Overview**

3.1.1 The British Red Cross run Support at Home services across the UK. The service provides one-to-one short term support for up to six weeks to increase a person's resilience and independence following illness, injury, hospital admission or other crisis. The service is aimed at giving them the confidence to continue with their daily lives.

3.1.2 The service is a key contributor to the local authority's duty under the Care Act 2014 to prevent and delay the need for greater intervention and services. This compliments the Directorate's position on prevention as set out in the [Adult Social Care Prevention Strategy 2023-2027](#). It, furthermore, supports hospital discharge, and prevents admission, and as such attract a proportion of funding from

the Better Care Fund.

3.1.3 Operating on a 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday basis the service employs a small team of three support workers to offer:

- Escorted shopping
- Emotional wellbeing support
- Preparation of the home for hospital discharge
- Supported appointments
- Companionship and confidence building
- Assistance with paperwork
- 'Safe and Well' checks
- Signposting and guidance
- Telephone support
- Assistance with meals
- Case liaison (e.g. hospital, GP, social care)
- Assistance with mobility

3.1.4 The service has a regular presence in the community, promoting their offer through events, activities and other community-based and voluntary sector organisations. The team also have regular contact and attendance at both Warrington and Whiston hospitals, liaising with discharge teams to support clients.

3.1.5 The overarching aims of the Support at Home services are to:

- Reduce delaying the transfer of care from health to social care for people who are medically fit and do not need to occupy a hospital bed by providing support following discharge, on return home (or place of residence)
- Ensure the service user is settled comfortably back into their home with immediate needs met and access to food, warmth, and low level support.
- Take active steps to reduce any immediate risks in the service user's home and reduce the likelihood of being returned to hospital.
- Reduce the risk of admission, re-admission to hospital or residential care admission by making referrals for both short-term and longer-term support.
- Ensure service users are encouraged to access and linked to information or other services and networks which may reduce anxiety and enhance ability to continue living independently in their home.

3.1.6 A breakdown of service outcomes is given at **Appendix One**. This includes two case studies showing impacts on individuals.

## 3.2 **Service contract**

- 3.2.1 The current contract was issued on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and ran for 2 years, with an option to extend for a further 12-months. This extension was invoked and the current contract comes to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.
- 3.2.2 Prior contracts for the Support at Home service go back to 2018, and prior to this the service was delivered under the title: 'Home from Hospital'. The service therefore has a long-standing relationship with the borough and established links across its communities.
- 3.2.3 The current contract value is £77,675.88 per annum, remaining unchanged over the 3-year term of the contract. Rises in operating costs during this period have been assessed and an increase to the contract value of £86,671 is recommended and fixed for the duration of the contract in 2025 – 2028.
- 3.2.4 The total cost of the contract over the three-year term would be £260,013 (based on an annual contract value of £86,671). The current contract is funded via the core adult social care budget, with a small percentage (circa. 10%) being funded via the Better Care Fund and can be met within existing budget allocations.
- 3.2.5 Should Members decide to continue with the service, a waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 iv of part 3 of Procurement Standing Orders would be needed to cover the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2028.

## 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The service forms part of the Adult Social Care offer of provision and meets statutory requirements in relation to the Care Act 2014. It impacts on prevention and delay of need and also support hospital discharge processes.
- 4.2 The British Red Cross have a long-standing relationship with the Council, offering added-value in relation to their association with the national British Red Cross branding and campaigns.

## 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 A waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 iv of part 3 of Procurement Standing Orders would be needed to cover a contract spanning the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2028. The total value of the contract would be £260,013. Of this amount 88% would be allocated to core adult social care budget, equating to £228,811.44, while the remaining £31,201.56 would be covered by the Better Care Fund.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES** [\(click here for list of priorities\)](#)

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

Through this contract the British Red Cross works with those who require short-term interventions and support in order to retain or regain their independence.

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

The service prevents and delays the need for social care support, reducing the reliance on public services.

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

No direct impact.

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

This service makes an important contribution to the health and social care system in Halton, supporting people at times of vulnerability.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

No direct impact

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

The service is based in the community and supports people to access community facilities.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Losing the service would impact on both social care and health services as people would be at risk of needing more complex interventions, including hospital admission.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The service is open to all adults across the borough regardless of circumstances.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no environmental or climate implications as a result of this report.

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

10.1 'None under the meaning of the Act.'

British Red Cross

# Halton Support at Home Service

---

Mobile : 07739 863 042

Email : [Haltonsupportathome@redcross.org.uk](mailto:Haltonsupportathome@redcross.org.uk)

## Key Performance Indicators January – December 2024

# Contents

---

- Service Delivery Details
- Number of referrals
- Accepted Referral Source
- Referrals Age Group
- Referrals Living Arrangements
- Peak Performance Indicators
- Detailed Geographical Source
- Feedback

## Service Delivery Details

<b>A short description of this contracted service:</b>	Halton Support at Home Service Provides one to one short term support for up to six (6) weeks, to increase a person's resilience and independence following an illness, injury, hospital admission or other crisis. giving them the confidence to continue their daily lives.
--	---

Service / Activity:	Location:	Duration	Service user group	Time of the service
Escorted Shopping	Halton	Up to Six Weeks	Patients discharged from Hospital with Low Level Social needs or at risk of re-admission with Low level Social needs	9.00.am to 5.00.pm Monday to Friday
Emotional Wellbeing	Halton	Up to Six Weeks	Patients discharged from Hospital with Low Level Social needs or at risk of re-admission with Low level Social needs	9.00.am to 5.00.pm Monday to Friday
Preparing home for discharge	Halton	Up to Six Weeks	Patients discharged from Hospital with Low Level Social needs or at risk of re-admission with Low level Social needs	9.00.am to 5.00.pm Monday to Friday
Supported Appointments	Halton	Up to Six Weeks	Patients discharged from Hospital with Low Level Social needs or at risk of re-admission with Low level Social needs	9.00.am to 5.00.pm Monday to Friday
Providing companionship/ confidence building	Halton	Up to Six Weeks	Patients discharged from Hospital with Low Level Social needs or at risk of re-admission with Low level Social needs	9.00.am to 5.00.pm Monday to Friday
Assistance with paperwork	Halton	Up to Six Weeks	Patients discharged from Hospital with Low Level Social needs or at risk of re-admission with Low level Social needs	9.00.am to 5.00.pm Monday to Friday
Safe and well checks	Halton	Up to Six Weeks	Patients discharged from Hospital with Low Level Social needs or at risk of re-admission with Low level Social needs	9.00.am to 5.00.pm Monday to Friday

Signposting and guidance	Halton	Up to Six Weeks	Patients discharged from Hospital with Low Level Social needs or at risk of re-admission with Low level Social needs	9.00.am to 5.00.pm Monday to Friday
Telephone support	Halton	Up to Six Weeks	Patients discharged from Hospital with Low Level Social needs or at risk of re-admission with Low level Social needs	9.00.am to 5.00.pm Monday to Friday
Assistance with meals	Halton	Up to Six Weeks	Patients discharged from Hospital with Low Level Social needs or at risk of re-admission with Low level Social needs	9.00.am to 5.00.pm Monday to Friday
Case Liaison	Halton	Up to Six Weeks	Patients discharged from Hospital with Low Level Social needs or at risk of re-admission with Low level Social needs	9.00.am to 5.00.pm Monday to Friday
Assisting with mobility	Halton	Up to Six Weeks	Patients discharged from Hospital with Low Level Social needs or at risk of re-admission with Low level Social needs	9.00.am to 5.00.pm Monday to Friday

## Halton Team

Name & Position	Mobile Number	Email Address
Lesley Jones Service Manager	07740455315	<a href="mailto:Lesleyjones@redcross.org.uk">Lesleyjones@redcross.org.uk</a>
Dawn Tarpey Service Coordinator	07739863042	<a href="mailto:DTarpey@redcross.org.uk">DTarpey@redcross.org.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Haltonsupportathome@redcross.org.uk">Haltonsupportathome@redcross.org.uk</a>
Shirley Mercer Team Support Worker	07885931823	<a href="mailto:SMercer@redcross.org.uk">SMercer@redcross.org.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Haltonsupportathome@redcross.org.uk">Haltonsupportathome@redcross.org.uk</a>
Tracey Madigan Team Support Worker	07927567603	<a href="mailto:TraceyMadigan@redcross.org.uk">TraceyMadigan@redcross.org.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Haltonsupportathome@redcross.org.uk">Haltonsupportathome@redcross.org.uk</a>



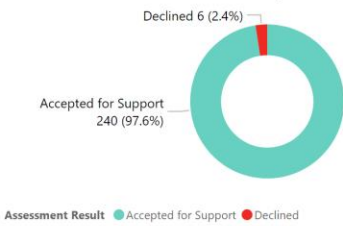
Reporting Period: 01/01/2024 - 31/12/2024 | Area: North | NHS Region: All | Health Board: All | Product Type: All | Scheme Status: All | Scheme: HFH Halton [Care i... | Sub Area: All | Case Status: All



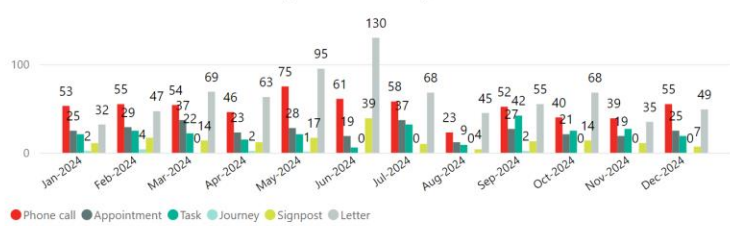
Selected scheme(s) with referrals: 1

In the reporting period, we received 246 new referrals (214 service users).  
 240 (97.6 %) new referrals (208 service users) are **accepted for support**,  
 0 (0.0 %) still **pending**, 6 (2.4 %) **declined** and 0 (0.0 %) **failed**.  
 The average case duration is 19.0 days.  
 2,113 completed activities including 611 phone call(s), 302 appointment(s),  
 264 task(s), 11 journey(s), 169 signpost(s) and 756 letter(s).

No. of New Referrals by Assessment Result

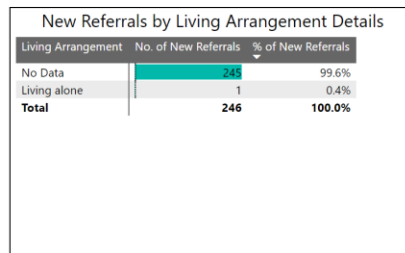
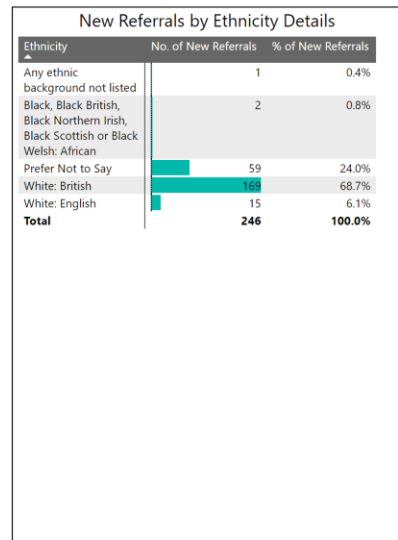
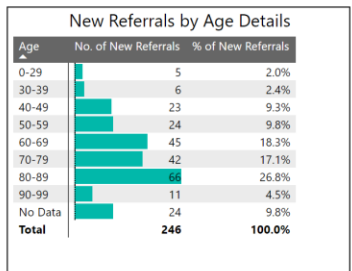
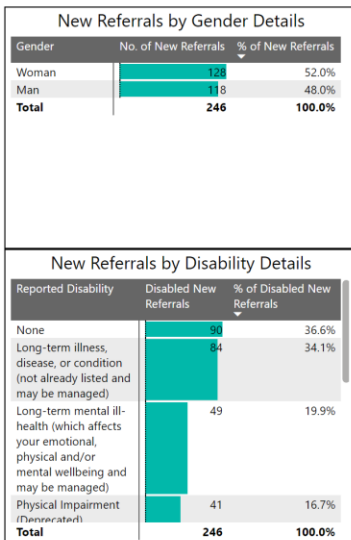


Completed Activities by Month



In 2024, 240 service users received support. Among them, 208 were new service users, while 32 had previously received support. There were 6 declines (did not need support at this time – family and friends) and no failures. In 2024, we accomplished 2,113 activities, including 611 telephone welfare and support calls, 302 appointments, 11 journeys with service users, 264 tasks, 169 signposts, and 756 letters or emails. These often involved referrals to other agencies, providing signposting information, and contacting.

Reporting Period: 01/01/2024 - 31/12/2024 | Area: North | NHS Region: All | Health Board: All | Product Type: All | Scheme: HFH Halton [Care i... | Sub Area: All | Assessment Result: All | Age: All



Service users aged 80 to 89 account for the highest number of referrals, closely followed by those aged 70 to 79. The gender distribution shows a slight predominance of females over males. Information on living arrangements was not available at the time of the report request. Additionally, there is no data on the age details for 24 service users, suggesting they were either unable to complete the referral form or this section was omitted.



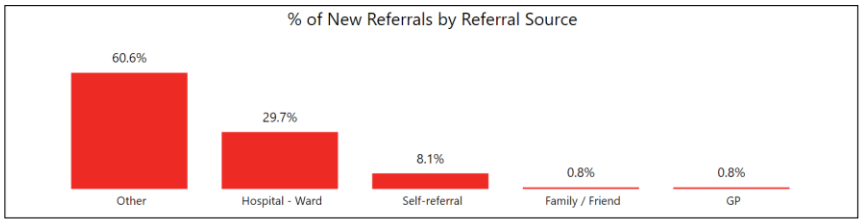
## Referral wards

Here for humanity

Reporting Period: 01/01/2024 - 31/12/2024 | Area: North | NHS Region: All | Health Board: All | Product Type: All | Scheme Status: All | Scheme: HFH Halton [Care in the Home] | Sub Area: All

Referral Source: All | Organisation Type: All | Assessment Result: All | Referrer: All | Referring Organisation: All

Referring Organisation	No. of New Referrals	% of New Referrals
99 Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service (CFRS) (M)	43	17.5%
53 Halton Healthy & Home	37	15.0%
58 Halton Citizens Advice	34	13.8%
22 Whiston Hospital	23	9.3%
No Data	22	8.9%
7 Halton Sure Start to Later Life	17	6.9%
63 Halton Bridgewater NHS	12	4.9%
64 Prevention Wellbeing Service (Previously IAT)	11	4.5%
37 Complex Care Widnes (CCW)	10	4.1%
4 Halton Stroke Association	6	2.4%
23 Hospital Social Services	4	1.6%
17 Halton Discharge Team	3	1.2%
36 Complex Care Runcorn (CCR)	3	1.2%
61 Halton intermediate care & frailty service(HICAF)	3	1.2%
65 Healthwatch Community Outreach Team	3	1.2%
66 Halton Housing	3	1.2%
11 Halton Riverside Housing	2	0.8%
19 Halton O/T	2	0.8%
15 Warrington Hospital	1	0.4%
29 Halton Wellbeing Enterprises	1	0.4%
44 Halton Murdishaw Health Centre	1	0.4%
57 Oak Meadow Widnes	1	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



Referral Source Type	No. of New Referrals	% of New Referrals
Other	149	60.6%
Hospital - Ward	73	29.7%
Self-referral	20	8.1%
Family / Friend	2	0.8%
GP	2	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Internal Referral Unit	No. of New Referrals	% of New Referrals
No data available for this chart.		

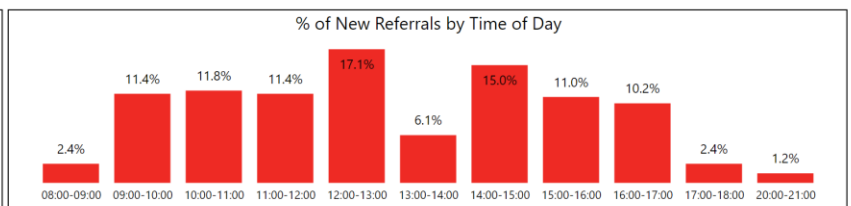
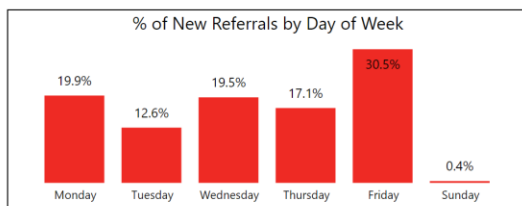


## Referrals by Day/ Time

Here for humanity

Reporting Period: 01/01/2024 - 31/12/2024 | Area: North | NHS Region: All | Health Board: All | Product Type: All | Scheme Status: All | Scheme: HFH Halton [Care in the Home] | Sub Area: All

Referrer: All | Assessment Result: All | Referring Organisation: All | Referral Day: All | Referral Time Range: All



Referral Day	No. of New Referrals	% of New Referrals
Monday	49	19.9%
Tuesday	31	12.6%
Wednesday	48	19.5%
Thursday	42	17.1%
Friday	75	30.5%
Sunday	1	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Referring Organisation	No. of New Referrals	% of New Referrals
11 Halton Riverside Housing	2	0.8%
15 Warrington Hospital	1	0.4%
17 Halton Discharge Team	3	1.2%
19 Halton O/T	2	0.8%
22 Whiston Hospital	23	9.3%
23 Hospital Social Services	4	1.6%
29 Halton Wellbeing Enterprises	1	0.4%
36 Complex Care Runcorn (CCR)	3	1.2%
37 Complex Care Widnes (CCW)	10	4.1%
4 Halton Stroke Association	6	2.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Referral Time Range	No. of New Referrals	% of New Referrals
08:00-09:00	6	2.4%
09:00-10:00	28	11.4%
10:00-11:00	29	11.8%
11:00-12:00	28	11.4%
12:00-13:00	42	17.1%
13:00-14:00	15	6.1%
14:00-15:00	37	15.0%
15:00-16:00	27	11.0%
16:00-17:00	25	10.2%
17:00-18:00	6	2.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

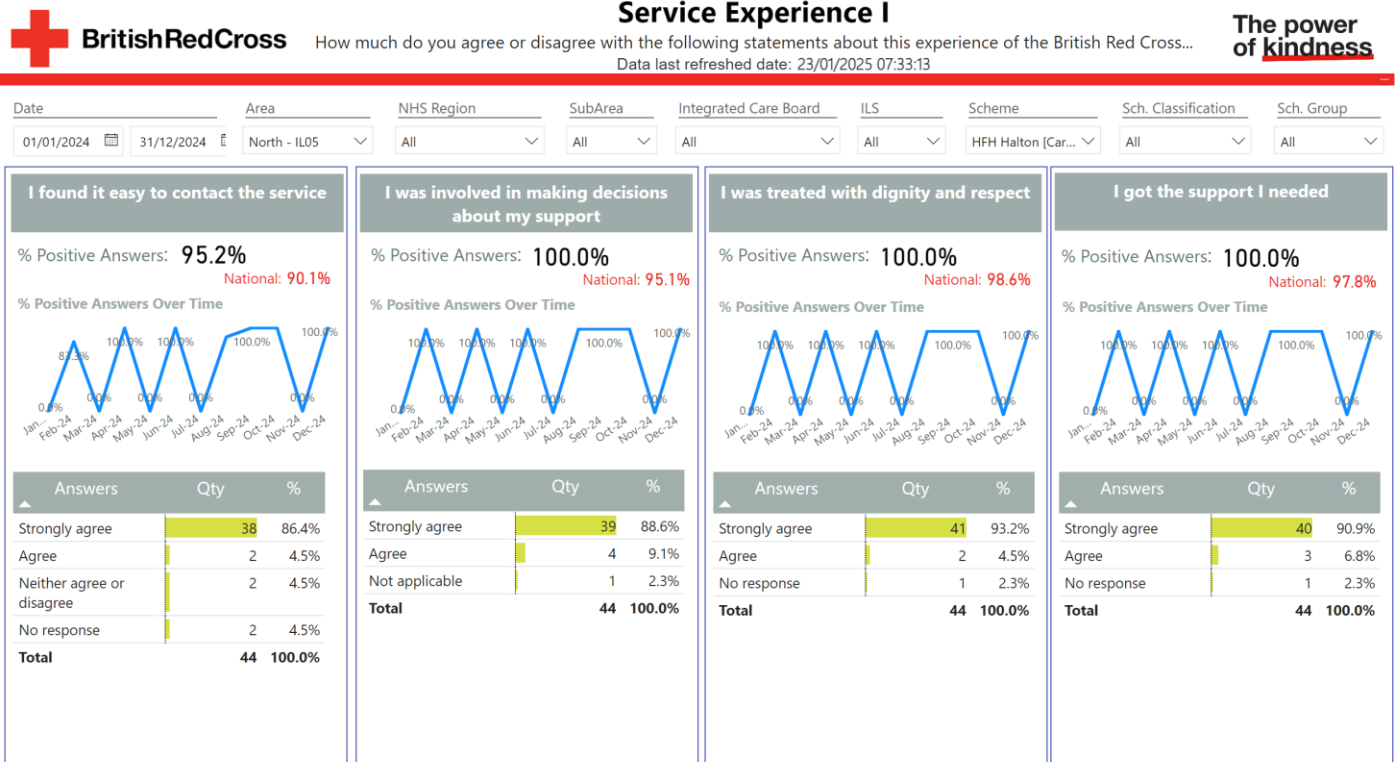


The power of kindness

The data from the graphs indicate that referrals from Whiston Hospital have improved since 2023. Community referrals are the highest for 2024, followed by hospital referrals. Additionally, Friday has the highest number of referrals for 2024.

## Feedback from Service Users

For 2024 - 44 feedback forms were completed & returned,



Date: 01/01/2024 - 31/12/2024 | Area: North - IL05 | NHS Region: All | SubArea: All | Integrated Care Board: All | ILS: All | Scheme: HFH Halton [Car... | Sch. Classification: All | Sch. Group: All

### I feel safe and reassured by the support I received

**% Positive Answers: 95.5%**  
National: 98.3%

**% Positive Answers Over Time**

Answers	Qty	%
Strongly agree	41	93.2%
Agree	1	2.3%
Strongly disagree	2	4.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### The support I received helped me to shield, self-isolate or distance at home successfully

**% Positive Answers: 83.3%**  
National: 89.0%

**% Positive Answers Over Time**

Answers	Qty	%
Strongly agree	4	9.1%
Agree	1	2.3%
Neither agree or disagree	1	2.3%
No response	1	2.3%
Not applicable	37	84.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### I know about other help I can get if I need it

**% Positive Answers: 100.0%**  
National: 91.8%

**% Positive Answers Over Time**

Answers	Qty	%
Strongly agree	39	88.6%
Agree	4	9.1%
Not applicable	1	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### I had a positive experience of being discharged from hospital

**% Positive Answers: 100.0%**  
National: 92.0%

**% Positive Answers Over Time**

Answers	Qty	%
Strongly agree	12	27.3%
Agree	4	9.1%
No response	1	2.3%
Not applicable	27	61.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Case Studies Oct/Dec Q3 2024

	<b>Halton Support at Home</b>
Clients' current situation	Mr. and Mrs. B live together in a large house, where Mr. B cares for his wife, assisting with personal needs and shopping. Mrs. B suffers from long-term ill health and is currently awaiting a stair lift from Halton Council and social services. Recently, Mr. B became unemployed from his part-time job, which has impacted their financial situation. Mr. B contacted the Red Cross to request assistance with a food bank parcel.
What we did/provided	A support worker took Mr. B's call, explained our services in detail, and arranged for a food bank delivery to their address. Upon delivering the food, Mr. B invited the support worker inside to discuss additional support options. Mrs. B expressed her distress over being doubly incontinent and having a lot of laundry due to the lack of incontinence pads, which she cannot afford. The support worker immediately referred her to the incontinence team. Although the family did not require further support at that moment, they inquired about ways to alleviate Mrs. B's boredom. The support worker suggested borrowing books from the mobile library van and provided Mrs. B with the contact number, as she preferred to handle this herself. This suggestion offered valuable mental stimulation and helped reduce her boredom while she is confined at home. The support worker also provided Mr. B with useful contact numbers for online and phone shopping services, although he prefers to shop in person for now.
The difference we made	We provided essential mental stimulation during this health crisis and promptly scheduled an appointment with the incontinence team, who responded the same day, although there is a four-week waiting period. Mrs. B is much happier knowing that someone has listened to her concerns and assisted with obtaining incontinence pads. Additionally, a referral was made to the Citizens Advice Bureau for a hardship loan to purchase new bedding. By providing a food bank parcel, we addressed their nutritional needs, including extra milk for Mrs. B, who is on Complan for weight loss.
Quote from Service User	"This has helped so much. We were scared to ask, but I'm glad we did as I've been treated with respect. It's hard to admit you need help, but you have not judged me and made me feel relaxed."

	<b>Halton Support at Home</b>
<b>Clients' current situation</b>	The patient was receiving palliative care for cancer, necessitating frequent hospital visits. He experienced significant pain and faced considerable physical and emotional challenges, rendering him unable to leave his home to perform his usual daily activities. He felt that his concerns about pain management were not being adequately addressed by his doctors, leading to a general sense of depression.
<b>What we did/provided</b>	<p>The support worker visited the service user to discuss how best to assist him. Initially, he was hesitant to accept help due to his pride as a former army man. However, the support worker was able to gain his trust and they developed a strong rapport, allowing her to support him effectively.</p> <p>The support worker took care of his weekly shopping, ensuring he received the special foods necessary for his recovery. Additionally, collecting his prescriptions and deposited cash into his bank account, alleviating his financial worries.</p> <p>The support worker visited the service user every week for a total of six weeks and provided emotional support and a friendly face and someone to talk to about his worries.</p> <p>During one visit, the support worker became extremely concerned about his mood, so she contacted his doctor to express her concerns and inform them about his ongoing pain. This prompted the doctor to conduct a home visit that same day. The support worker referred him to Macmillan Cancer Support for emotional support during his treatment.</p>
<b>The difference we made</b>	<p>We believe that the assistance we provided to the service user significantly eased his ability to focus on his treatment, without the added stress of managing his shopping or prescriptions. Having someone to converse with weekly, address any arising issues, and offer simple gestures like making a cup of tea and providing emotional support was invaluable.</p> <p>The doctor's home visit, prompted by the Red Cross's phone call, ensured that the service user received appropriate pain management and would be closely monitored in the future.</p>
<b>Quote from Service User</b>	"I have found Tracey a wonderful help during these dark days. She is always upbeat & cheerful, and ready with advice whenever I have sought it. Her advice on shopping has been a life saver. I know her Red Cross services have only a couple of weeks to run but I am so grateful for all her help. Everything handled for me by the Red Cross has been first class, especially your local agent Tracey. I cannot thank her enough for her encouragement, help, advice and cheerfulness. You need more like Tracey.

	<b>Halton Support at Home</b>
Clients' current situation	Mr. A was referred to the British Red Cross by the Stroke Association. He lives with his two small dogs and has been struggling to attend a mobility assessment after suffering a stroke. This stroke has impacted both his mobility and speech, causing frustration when he isn't understood, which has led to missed appointments.
What we did/provided	Two support workers visited his home before the appointment to conduct a risk assessment, ensuring we could safely transport Mr. A in a car.  On the day of his appointment, Mr. A appeared quite anxious. We reassured him that we had ample time to reach his appointment. We ensured his dogs had access to water before leaving and assisted Mr. A to the car, encouraging him to use his walking stick and take his time. During the journey, we engaged in light conversation, allowing Mr. A the time he needed to respond, which helped him feel more at ease. At the appointment, we informed the NHS assessor that Mr. A required additional time to answer questions. After the appointment, we accompanied Mr. A back home. He was in good spirits and pleased with how the appointment went.
The difference we made	Mr A wasn't confident in attending the appointment on his own. He gets extremely frustrated when he isn't understood and, in the past, had declined to leave his home.
Quote from Service User	Thank you very much for being patient with me. I was very worried about going to the appointment on my own and had cancelled a couple of appointments because of my speech impairment.

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Executive Board
<b>DATE:</b>	25 February 2025
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Executive Director Environment & Regeneration
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Environment and Urban Renewal
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Halton Local Development Scheme (LDS)
<b>WARD(S)</b>	Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report seeks approval from the Board to delegate powers to the Director for Planning & Transport in consultation with Portfolio Holders for Environment Urban Renewal and Climate Change and Housing, to give delegation to make editorial changes to the Local Development Scheme work plan prior to submission to MHCLG.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board**

- 1. note the report;**
- 2. approve the schedule of work within the LDS; and**
- 3. give delegated powers to the Director of Planning and Transport, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Urban Renewal, for final approval before submission on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Local Plan for Halton currently comprises of the adopted Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022) and the Joint Waste Plan (2013). The statutory Local Development Plan is the set of Local Plans (also known as Development Plan Documents (DPDs) that together form the statutory basis for determining whether or not planning permission should be granted.
- 3.2 In December 2024 the deputy Prime Minister wrote to all Local Planning Authorities requesting an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) be sent to MHCLG by the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025<sup>1</sup>. The LDS informs work which is required to maintain a Local Plan, in line with National Policy.

---

1

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675c1cc0b745d5f7a053eed/Planning\\_update\\_newsletter\\_13\\_December\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675c1cc0b745d5f7a053eed/Planning_update_newsletter_13_December_2024.pdf) accessed January 2025



- 3.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>2</sup> informs planning authorities of Government Policies and procedures which are required to be undertaken in order to remain compliant. The NPPF para 34 and regulation 10a of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (Regs 2012)<sup>3</sup> informs that a 5 year review should be undertaken to maintain a Local Plan and ensure its policies are met.
- 3.4 Halton is due to start work on its partial review of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan in April 2026, however given the capacity within the team some of the evidence based documents will start to be reviewed earlier, such as the
- Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton.
  - An Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) has been produced alongside the Local Plan to identify essential supporting infrastructure and services, how they will be delivered and by whom.
  - An Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR) setting out progress in terms of producing documents and in implementing policies.
- 3.5 The LDS is a public statement of Halton Borough Council's policy team work program. The process of reviewing Local Plans is a lengthy one, made so by the detailed protocols set out in legislation and regulations.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Planning applications should normally be determined in accordance with the Development Plan.

*"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."* [Section 38(6): Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004]

- 4.2 This is reiterated in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that Plans should be reviewed at least every 5 years, and policies not reviewed within this time may be considered to be out-of-date. It is important therefore that Halton maintains an up-to-date Local Plan and that efforts are concentrated towards the most crucial elements of this.
- 4.3 Given the new NPPF and emerging Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) the Planning Policy team are preparing to review and where necessary update the relevant evidence based documents in line with national policy.

---

<sup>2</sup> [National Planning Policy Framework](#) accessed January 2025

<sup>3</sup> [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) accessed January 2025

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The LDS is a statutory 'process document' and as such has no direct financial implications beyond setting the timetable for the partial review of different planning documents that may incur expenditure on supporting evidence base or statutory assessments.

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

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

The LDS is a statutory 'process document' that sets out the programme for the updating of the Local Plan, which is intended to assist in the delivery of the Local Plan

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

The LDS supports the above by providing additional information to develop a strong and sustainable local economy through its policies.

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

The LDS supports the above by providing additional information to support Children, Young people and Families by its policies and strategies to encourage strong and vibrant communities to grow, learn and live in.

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

The LDS supports the above by providing additional information to develop a fair and equitable borough by providing policies that shape our community.

### **6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future**

The LDS supports the above by providing additional information to guide developers and investors in the borough of the aspirations of the borough to reduce its carbon footprint.

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

The LDS contains policies that supports the delivery of affordable homes and the enhancement of the communities in which we will live and work.

## **7.0 Risk Analysis**

- 7.1 An LDS is a statutory document. Not having an up to date LDS puts the Authority at the risk of legal challenge. Stakeholders are entitled to rely upon forward notice of the Local Plans that will be produced and may directly impact on their assets or business.
- 7.2 The LDS is an explicit commitment to the delivery of the Local Plan over a definite period. Not having a specific and relatively fixed work programme for Local Plan delivery means that resources are not prioritised and used

as effectively as they could be.

- 7.3 The risk of not having an up-to-date Local Plan needs to be fully understood. Without a current Local Plan, the development industry has no certainty over where different types of land use will be permitted; appeals against refusal of planning permission are more likely to be upheld in the developer's favour with the possibility of costs awarded against the Council. An up-to-date Local Plan is needed to retain local control over decision making.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 8.1 Building stronger communities through community engagement and good planning is a key aspect of the Local Plan. The Council is already committed to equality regardless of age, sex, caring responsibility, race, religion, marital status, maternity issues, gender reassignment, socio economic need, sexuality or disability and these commitments are reflected in the Local Plan as far as is relevant. Planning Policy documents are subjected to Equality Impact Assessments during their production to ensure compliance.

## **9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The LDS provides an opportunity to shape and manage future development and its impact on the Climate by encouraging the use of new and innovative technologies to reduce its carbon footprint.

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

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Halton Local Development Scheme 2025	Municipal Building, Widnes	Rebecca Taylor
The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)	Municipal Building, Widnes	Rebecca Taylor
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2025)	Municipal Building, Widnes	Rebecca Taylor
National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)	Municipal Building, Widnes	Rebecca Taylor
Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP 2022)	Municipal Building, Widnes	Rebecca Taylor
Waste Local Plan (2013)	Municipal Building, Widnes	Rebecca Taylor

# Halton Borough Council

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY - MARCH 2025**

REBECCA TAYLOR



Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	2
<b>Legal Context</b> .....	2
<b>Development Plan</b> .....	3
<b>Development Scheme</b> .....	4
<b>Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (Incorporating Revised Core Strategy Policies)</b> .....	4
<b>Process Documents</b> .....	6
<b>Project Management and Resources</b> .....	9
<b>Monitoring and Review</b> .....	9
<b>Risk Assessment</b> .....	9
<b>Acronyms</b> .....	12
<b>Appendix A:</b> .....	13
<b>Local Development Scheme Details</b> .....	13

## **Introduction**

- 1.1. This document is the Local Development Scheme (LDS) for Halton and sets out the documents that Halton Borough Council will produce, along with a timetable for the preparation and review of these documents. It provides the starting point for local communities, businesses, developers, service and infrastructure providers and other interested stakeholders to find out what local planning policy documents relate to their area and the timetable for their preparation. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) requires local planning authorities to prepare, maintain and publish a LDS. Halton's LDS will be available to view online at [Background Documents \(halton.gov.uk\)](https://www.halton.gov.uk/background-documents)
- 1.2. In December 2024 the Deputy Prime Minister wrote to Local Planning Authorities and requested a new/revised LDS be submitted by the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025<sup>1</sup>.

## **Legal Context**

- 1.3. The primary legislation that guides the planning system, including the production of Local Plans is set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 with amendments from the 2008 Planning Act and 2011 Localism Act. Further detail on procedures for producing Local Plans is contained within the associated regulations, the latest being the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) which came into force in April 2012.
- 1.4. The Localism Act (2011) included a number of changes to the “plan-making” system including the ability for local communities to prepare neighbourhood development plans that would form part of the overall development plan for the area. Another important aspect of the legislative changes is the duty to co-operate which requires the Council to co-operate with other local planning authorities and prescribed bodies to maximise the effectiveness of the preparation of the Local Plan and supporting activities so far as it relates to a strategic matter.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first published on 27 March 2012 and subsequently updated on

- 24 July 2018, 19 February 2019,
- 20 July 2021, 5 September 2023
- 19 December 2023 and
- 14 December 2024

---

1

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675c1cc0b745d5f7a053eed/Planning\\_update\\_newsletter\\_13\\_December\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675c1cc0b745d5f7a053eed/Planning_update_newsletter_13_December_2024.pdf)

by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and the Government's requirements for the planning system.

The December 2024 update to the NPPF<sup>2</sup> made changes to Planning policy, due to the Local Plan being adopted in 2022 the plan remains under the same guidance as when adopted until its planned 5 year review as per The NPPF (para 34<sup>3</sup>) and Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning, England Regulations 2012), to take into account any relevant changes to national planning policy. It is intended that a partial review of the Delivery Allocations Local Plan will start to be undertaken in April 2026. A future LDS will set out a timetable in April 2026.

- 1.5. National Planning Practice Guidance was launched by MHCLG in March 2014, it is a completely online resource and is live, which means that guidance can be quickly amended in order to keep it up to date. It provides guidance from MHCLG to planning professionals to guide them in developing sites, making policies and taking decisions on planning applications. It is anticipated that new guidance will be shared in the forthcoming months, which will inform future LDS and Local Plan reviews.

## **Development Plan**

- 1.6. The statutory Development Plan is the set of Local Plans (also known as Development Plan Documents (DPDs)) that together form the statutory basis for determining whether or not planning permission should be granted.
- 1.7. Local Plans are planning documents that contain policies for the use and protection or development of land, usually including the allocation of land for development. These must be in general conformity with government guidance, in particular the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 1.8. Neighbourhood development plans are defined by NPPF as a plan prepared by a parish council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area. In law this is described within the [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#). They are required to undergo formal consultation and preparation procedures including an examination by an independent person and a public referendum. Subject to the successful completion of these procedures the neighbourhood development plan will ultimately be adopted by the council as part of the statutory development plan.
- 1.9. The Development Plan for Halton currently comprises: the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022) and the Joint Waste Local Plan (2013).
- 1.10. Parish Councils or neighbourhood forums have an option to produce Neighbourhood Plans on their own behalf and in their own timescale, the local development scheme does not seek to set this out. To date no parishes or neighbourhood areas in the Borough have yet begun the formal process to begin the development of such a plan.

---

<sup>2</sup> NPPF Dec 2024 [National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>3</sup> [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)



- 1.11. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) (and their predecessors, supplementary planning guidance) complement or expand upon local plan policies, for example describing in more detail how an allocated site should be developed. A SPD cannot allocate new sites for development nor contain new policies for the use or development of land, and they must not conflict with the adopted development plan. SPDs are subject to community involvement but do not require independent Examination. They do not form a statutory part of the development plan for the authority but are a material consideration when assessing any planning application to which they relate.

## **Local Development Scheme**

### **Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan**

- 1.12. The Local Plan (2022) provides a robust policy framework to guide future development within the Borough. Specifically, the Local Plan has:
- a. Replaced selected policies from the Halton Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted April 2013) and the remaining saved policies of the Halton UDP (adopted April 2005).
  - b. Allocates land for residential, employment, retail, leisure and other land uses.
  - c. Designates areas protected for landscape, nature conservation, environmental and heritage reasons.
  - d. Provides policies to guide decision making in the development management process.

Halton Borough Council is currently preparing a number of supplementary planning documents to support the policy implementation of the adopted Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022).

Officers continue to working closely with colleagues in the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the production of the LCR LDS, to ensure that they compliment the over arching priorities and emerging LCR Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS)

The most recent revision of the NPPF in December 2024 and its policies will be taken into full consideration with the commencement of it partial review in April 2026.

### **Timetable**

- 1.13. More detail is provided in Appendix A.
- 1.14. The Council is liaising with partner authorities across the Liverpool City Region on the review and of the
- Joint Halton and Merseyside Waste Local Plan.
  - Local Nature Recovery Strategy
  - Sustainable Development Strategy

1.15. Other planning documents intended to be prepared by the Council include:

- a. Houses of Multiple Occupation (Adoption anticipated Spring 25)
- b. Climate Change SPD (Adoption anticipated Spring 25)
- c. Adding Social Value to Development SPD
- d. Transport and Accessibility SPD
- e. House Extensions SPD
- f. Planning Obligations SPD

Indicative Timetable

	2024		2025				2026			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Housing of Multiple Occupation SPD										
Climate Change SPD										
Adding Social Value to Development										
Transport & Accessibility SPD										
House Extensions SPD										
Planning Obligations										

1.16. The following supporting documents have been or are being produced by the Council to support the policy contained within the Local Plan and to provide more guidance to those undertaking development or to those making decisions on planning applications.

1.17. **Local Development Orders (LDO)** are policy instruments that extend permitted development rights for certain forms of development that the local authority considers to be suitable, either in general or limited to defined areas. LDOs are intended to simplify development. Development that conforms to an LDO would not require planning permission.

## **Process Documents**

- 1.18. A **Sustainability Appraisal Report (SA)** is prepared alongside a planning document, including the Local Plan, to ensure that the document as a whole reflects a balance of sustainable development objectives (social, environmental and economic factors). The SA incorporates the requirements of the European Union (EU) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive 2001/42.
- 1.19. **Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)** is a requirement of the European Habitat Directive and seeks to assess the potential impact of a proposed plan in conjunction with the other plans and policies on one or more European Habitat sites. This is also referred to as the Appropriate Assessment (AA).
- 1.20. An updated **Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)** has been prepared alongside the Local Plan to identify essential supporting infrastructure and services, how they will be delivered and by whom.
- 1.21. **Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)** will set out whether the Council is on target to meet the milestones set out in the LDS, it will provide information on whether the policy targets included in the Local Plan are being achieved and will identify key issues that are relevant to the borough that should be used to revise the LDS if necessary.
- 1.22. **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** – The Halton SCI was updated and approved in 2020. It sets out how the community will be involved in the preparation, alteration and review of planning policy documents produced by the Council and how they can be expected to be consulted on planning applications.
- 1.23. **Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (AIFS)** - is annual public report which provides a summary of developer contributions in line with government guidance.

## **3. Evidence Base**

- 3.1 The key pieces of Halton's existing evidence base which will be used to support the Local Plan are set out below (please note that other existing evidence base documents may also be used, where required, alongside these):

<b>A</b>	<b>Whole Plan Viability Study</b> (HDH Planning & Development Ltd 2019)	The study assessed the viability impacts of emerging planning policies to ensure that the Local Plan, when taken as a whole, is viable and deliverable and providing evidence to support affordable housing provision from qualifying sites.
<b>B</b>	<b>Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA)</b>	This study identifies housing and employment land needs for the City Region over the period to 2037

	(GL Hearn 2017)	
<b>C</b>	<b>Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment Vol.2</b> (March 2018) (GL Hearn)	This study quantifies the potential supply of land for large scale B8 (warehousing).
<b>D</b>	<b>Joint Employment Land and Premises Study</b> (BE Group, 2010)	The study assesses the quantity and quality of employment land in the Borough and recommends future allocations of employment land to maintain economic growth.
<b>E</b>	<b>Halton Retail Study</b> (England & Lyle 2017):	This is a capacity study looking to identify trading roles and performance of the Borough's main retail centres and to quantify the need, if any, for additional provision.
<b>F</b>	<b>Halton Landscape Character Assessment</b> (TEP, 2009):	This identifies, describes and maps areas according to various landscape character types.
<b>G</b>	<b>Halton Open Space Study</b> (PMP and HBC, 2006/2021).	The study assesses existing and future needs for open space, sport and recreation in Halton and the current ability to meet these needs.
<b>H</b>	<b>Halton Strategic Flood Risk Assessment</b> Level 1 (HBC, 2017)	Provides a detailed assessment of the extent and nature of the risk of flooding and the implications for future development.
<b>I</b>	<b>Halton Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment</b> (JBA, 2019)	Detailed flood risk assessment for individual potential development sites, focusing on risk from three primary watercourses.
<b>J</b>	<b>Liverpool City Region Renewable Energy Capacity Study</b> (Arup, 2010):	This study identifies Energy Priority Zones for the delivery of low and zero carbon technologies.
<b>K</b>	<b>Cheshire Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment</b> (June 2018)	Assessment of accommodation and related service needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show people across Halton, Warrington and Cheshire.
<b>L</b>	<b>Liverpool City Region and Warrington Green Infrastructure Framework Draft</b> (Mersey Forest, 2013)	This Framework provides information and new perspectives on green infrastructure across the seven local authorities.
<b>M</b>	<b>Liverpool City Region and Warrington Green Infrastructure Framework Action Plan</b>	This Plan identifies actions at a city region level that meet key priorities of the Green Infrastructure Framework.

	(Mersey Forest, 2013):	
<b>N</b>	<b>Listed Buildings in Halton:</b>	Compendium detailing each of the Listed Buildings in Halton, including location map and image(s) of the property or structure.
<b>O</b>	<b>Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy</b> (HBC and GVA, 2008)	This study details the opportunities that the Mersey Ga
<b>P</b>	<b>Halton Green Belt Study:</b> (HBC 2018):	This study reviews and assesses the Green Belt around Widnes and Hale, Runcorn, Moore, Daresbury and Preston-on-the-Hill.
<b>Q</b>	<b>Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment</b> (2020)	This is the main mechanism to identify a deliverable and developable supply of sites in the Borough for housing.
<b>R</b>	<b>Halton Housing Land Availability Report</b> (annual update)	This report provides data on land availability and take-up (build) rates for housing within Halton
<b>S</b>	<b>Halton Employment Land Availability Report</b> (annual update)	This report provides data on land availability and take-up (build) rates for employment uses within Halton
<b>T</b>	<b>Liverpool City Region Transport Plan for Growth:</b> (2015)	This document combines the key elements from the Local Transport Plans for Merseyside and Halton
<b>U</b>	<b>Playing Pitch Strategy:</b> (2021)	This strategy assessed existing and future needs for playing pitch provision in Halton.
<b>V</b>	<b>Halton Local List:</b>	This document identifies the non-designated heritage assets in Halton.
<b>W</b>	<b>Liverpool City Region Ecological Network</b> (MEAS, 2015)	This study assessed existing and future needs for ecological site protection and potential enhancement.
<b>X</b>	<b>Halton Non-Breeding Birds Survey</b> (Avian Consulting 2019):	This survey identified functionally linked habitat associated with the Special Protection Area of the Mersey Estuary for overwintering non breeding wetland birds.

## 4. Delivery

- 4.1. Emerging Changes to Planning Policy may impact on the delivery of the above programme. There will always be an element of uncertainty associated with a document of this nature. It is legitimate to ask how reasonable and achievable the targets are set out above, and what issues may affect the overall delivery of the LDS.
- 4.2. An assumption has been made over the amount of time that will need to be allocated to public and stakeholder involvement. Whilst this has been based on past

experience, it cannot accurately predict how many people will wish to engage with the Council on a particular project.

- 4.3. The programme has to be flexible in terms of staff, both the turnover and the allocation of work – neither can be fully accounted for over a three-year period.

### **Project Management and Resources**

- 4.4. Preparation of the planning documents will be led by the Council's planning policy team. The work will be complemented by other council officers with specialist expertise in particular areas e.g. housing, urban design, heritage and conservation, leisure, transport, environment, health and legal. In addition, external resources may be called upon, including Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) and consultants for certain projects.
- 4.5. The Director for Planning and Transport has a strategic overview of the production of planning policy documents; the Principal Officer for Planning and Transport Strategy is responsible for the management of the programme and document production.
- 4.6. Elected member involvement in plan preparation is primarily via the Local Plan Working Party. This group provides advice and feedback to officers on a range of planning policy matters. The decision to submit the Local Plan to the Secretary of State and subsequent stages up to and including adoption will be via full Council resolution, but agreement to publicly consult on draft documents can be given by the Executive Board.

### **Monitoring and Review**

- 4.7. To ensure that the plan process is achieving its objectives, the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) will set out the progress and effectiveness of the plan preparation processes. The AMR is updated annually and will report key milestones in relation to the progress of the development plan documents such as the Annual Infrastructure Fund Statement (AIFS) and Halton's Employment Land Assessment (HELA) amongst other relevant items.
- 4.8. Unforeseen developments such as the closure of a major employer may lead to the requirement for the Local Development Scheme to be reviewed earlier as this may require new SPDs or DPDs to be produced urgently whilst other documents are delayed.

### **Risk Assessment**

4.9. The table below identifies possible risks that could be encountered in the implementation of this LDS. It sets out an evaluation of the significance of the potential risk and the mitigation measures to manage risk should it occur.

	Risk	Likelihood	Issue	Mitigation
1	IT Systems	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient expertise</li> <li>• Resources – software, hardware and staff</li> <li>• Loss of data</li> <li>• Lack of access to data held by other teams</li> <li>• Changes to systems used could all lead to slippage in the programme.</li> </ul>	Staff training, appropriate resourcing, and improvements to data access could reduce these risks.
2	Staffing Issues	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of experienced staff</li> <li>• Reduced numbers of staff</li> <li>• Sickness</li> </ul> <p>Could lead to slippage in the programme, reduced staff moral and motivation, over work of existing staff potentially leading to sickness within the team and thereby increasing the issue.</p>	Prompt recruitment of new staff, or temporary staff and careful management of the work programme could reduce these risks.
3	Political Delay	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee cycle dates</li> <li>• Last minute changes and amendments</li> <li>• Change in National or Sub-Regional Government</li> </ul> <p>Reporting procedures and long lead in times may lead to slippage in the programme.</p>	Ensuring involvement of members throughout the process and regular reviews of the programmed should help to reduce this risk.
4	Change in National / Local Government Policy	High	All stages of Local Plan preparation are influenced by government policy. Changing policies/priorities and uncertainty for the Local Plan.	Ensure that policy team is abreast of changes in policy.
5	Team undertaking other work	High	Resources are finite (3 FTE). If the project team is required to input in to other priority areas of the Authority or Combined Authority, this is likely to cause slippage in the programme.	Local Plan to be a corporate priority ensuring team remain focused on delivery.
6	Volume of work greater than anticipated	Medium	This may include a higher number of representations than expected, new work areas, or additional evidence base requirements leading to slippage in the programme.	Ensure timetable is realistic and has a degree of built-in flexibility.

	Risk	Likelihood	Issue	Mitigation
7	Duty to Co-operate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint Working</li> <li>• Negotiation</li> </ul> When working to differing timelines, priorities for joint working may differ and lead to delays in evidence or discussion taking place.	Ensure that timetables are realistic and reflect partner authorities' / organisations' ability to contribute to joint working.
8	Consultation Fatigue	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of responses</li> <li>• Lack of understanding with regard to the purpose/content of the plan.</li> </ul>	Ensure approach set out in the SCI is used, where possible adopt new ideas to improve consultation. Use plain English.
9	Need for further consultation	Medium	It can be hard to predict where and when extra consultation may be required but may be as a result of the Hearing or due to the levels of comments received.	Ensure timetable is realistic, reviewed regularly and has a degree of built in flexibility.
10	Need for specialist Input	High	It is normally possible to foresee where there is a need for specialist involvement therefore reducing the risk associated with this issue. However, on occasions e.g. where new Government guidance is created, it may be necessary to use specialists without additional time being built into the programme, therefore causing delays.	Ensure that policy team is abreast of changes in policy and allow for some flexibility in the AMR.



## Acronyms

AMR	Authority Monitoring Report
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
DPD	Development Plan Document
LDO	Local Development Order
LDS	Local Development Scheme
NDP	Neighbourhood Development Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PPG	National Planning Policy Guidance
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document

## Appendix A:

### Local Development Scheme Details

<b>Adding Social Value to Development</b>		
<b>Document Details</b>		
Title	Adding Social Value to Development	
Role and Content	Sets out detailed guidance for the public, planners, housing providers, developers and their agents, clarifying definitions and procedural matters in dealing with planning applications and Social Value requirements.	
Status	Material Consideration in the determination of planning applications.	
Geographical coverage	Borough wide	
Chain of Conformity	Conforms with the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan specifically policy ED2 and National Planning Policy Framework	
<b>Timetable and Milestones</b>		
Start	Begin collation of evidence and start engaging stakeholders in the early preparation of the document	November 2025
SA Scoping	Consultation on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal	
Initial Consultation	Iterative process – identifying issues and options, developing preferred options and taking account of the evidence base	
Publication	Publish the final draft document and consult for 4 weeks on the content prior to adoption.	
Adoption	Document adopted and published	
<b>Arrangements for Production</b>		
Lead Department	Planning Policy	
Management arrangements	Executive Board approval will be required for public consultation on draft Plan(s). Full Council approval will be required for adoption.	
Resources	To be provided within the Planning Policy budget.	
Involving Stakeholders and Community	Consultation will be undertaken in line with the Regulations and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI 2020).	
<b>Post Production</b>		
Monitoring	Monitored by the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).	
Review	The effectiveness of this SPD will be reviewed through the data collected within the AMR.	
<b>Transport and Accessibility SPD</b>		
<b>Document Details</b>		
Title	Transport and Accessibility SPD	
Role and Content	This SPD will show how development can satisfy the requirements of accessibility policies contained within Halton's Development Plan. It will assist developers in ensuring that their proposals are accessible, promote sustainable travel patterns and minimise the congestion and pollution caused by vehicles. The main objective of the SPD is to ensure a good choice of travel modes to all new development.	

Status	Material Consideration in the determination of planning applications.	
Geographical coverage	Borough wide	
Chain of Conformity	Conforms with the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan specifically CSR 15 / C1 and National Planning Policy Framework	
<b>Timetable and Milestones</b>		
Start	Begin collation of evidence and start engaging stakeholders in the early preparation of the document	Anticipated April 2025
SA Scoping	Consultation on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal	
Initial Consultation	Iterative process – identifying issues and options, developing preferred options and taking account of the evidence base	
Publication	Publish the final draft document and consult for 4 weeks on the content prior to adoption.	
Adoption	Document adopted and published	
<b>Arrangements for Production</b>		
Lead Department	Planning Policy	
Management arrangements	Executive Board approval will be required for public consultation on draft Plan(s). Full Council approval will be required for adoption.	
Resources	To be provided within the Planning Policy budget.	
Involving Stakeholders and Community	Consultation will be undertaken in line with the Regulations and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI 2020).	
<b>Post Production</b>		
Monitoring	Monitored by the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).	
Review	The effectiveness of this SPD will be reviewed through the data collected within the AMR.	
<b>Houses of Multiple Occupation SPD</b>		
<b>Document Details</b>		
Title	Houses of Multiple Occupation SPD	
Role and Content	This SPD is intended to raise awareness and assist in the appropriate designation of HMOs to ensure quality, equitable distribution of the designated properties.	
Status	Material Consideration in the determination of planning applications.	
Geographical coverage	Borough wide	
Chain of Conformity	Conforms with the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan specifically CS(R)12, RD3, C2, and GR2, and National Planning Policy Framework	
<b>Arrangements for Production</b>		
Lead Department	Planning Policy	
Management arrangements	Executive Board approval will be required for public consultation on draft Plan(s). Full Council approval will be required for adoption.	
Resources	To be provided within the Planning Policy budget.	

Involving Stakeholders and Community	Consultation will be undertaken in line with the Regulations and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI 2020).	
<b>Timetable and Milestones</b>		
Start	Begin collation of evidence and start engaging stakeholders in the early preparation of the document	May 2024
SA Scoping	Consultation on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal	August 2024
Initial Consultation	Iterative process – identifying issues and options, developing preferred options and taking account of the evidence base	August 2024
Publication	Publish the final draft document and consult for 4 weeks on the content prior to adoption.	Anticipated May 2025
Adoption	Document adopted and published	
<b>Post Production</b>		
Monitoring	Monitored by the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).	
Review	The effectiveness of this SPD will be reviewed through the data collected within the AMR.	
<b>Climate Change SPD</b>		
<b>Document Details</b>		
Title	Climate Change SPD	
Role and Content	Sets out detailed guidance for the public, planners, housing providers, developers and their agents, clarifying definitions and procedural matters in dealing with planning applications and Open Space requirements.	
Status	Material Consideration in the determination of planning applications.	
Geographical coverage	Borough wide	
Chain of Conformity	Conforms with the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan specifically policy CSR20 ,21 and HEI and National Planning Policy Framework	
<b>Timetable and Milestones</b>		
Start	Begin collation of evidence and start engaging stakeholders in the early preparation of the document	May 2024
SA Scoping	Consultation on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal	August 2024
Initial Consultation	Iterative process – identifying issues and options, developing preferred options and taking account of the evidence base	August 2024
Publication	Publish the final draft document and consult for 4 weeks on the content prior to adoption.	Anticipated May 2025
Adoption	Document adopted and published	
<b>Arrangements for Production</b>		
Lead Department	Planning Policy	
Management arrangements	Executive Board approval will be required for public consultation on draft Plan(s). Full Council approval will be required for adoption.	
Resources	To be provided within the Planning Policy budget.	

Involving Stakeholders and Community	Consultation will be undertaken in line with the Regulations and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI 2020).	
<b>Post Production</b>		
Monitoring	Monitored by the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).	
Review	The effectiveness of this SPD will be reviewed through the data collected within the AMR.	
<b>House Extension SPD</b>		
<b>Document Details</b>		
Title	House Extension SPD	
Role and Content	This SPD is intended to help householders, developers, agents and architects who are planning and designing an extension or alterations (householder development) to an existing residential property, including conservatories and outbuildings.	
Status	Material Consideration in the determination of planning applications.	
Geographical coverage	Borough wide	
Chain of Conformity	Conforms with the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan specifically RD3 and CSR 18 and National Planning Policy Framework	
<b>Arrangements for Production</b>		
Lead Department	Planning Policy	
Management arrangements	Executive Board approval will be required for public consultation on draft Plan(s). Full Council approval will be required for adoption.	
Resources	To be provided within the Planning Policy budget.	
Involving Stakeholders and Community	Consultation will be undertaken in line with the Regulations and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI 2020).	
<b>Timetable and Milestones</b>		
Start	Begin collation of evidence and start engaging stakeholders in the early preparation of the document	Anticipated September 2025
SA Scoping	Consultation on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal	
Initial Consultation	Iterative process – identifying issues and options, developing preferred options and taking account of the evidence base	
Publication	Publish the final draft document and consult for 4 weeks on the content prior to adoption.	
Adoption	Document adopted and published	
<b>Post Production</b>		
Monitoring	Monitored by the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).	
Review	The effectiveness of this SPD will be reviewed through the data collected within the AMR.	
<b>Planning Obligations</b>		
<b>Document Details</b>		
Title	Climate Change SPD	

Role and Content	Sets out detailed guidance for the public, planners, housing providers, developers and their agents, clarifying definitions and procedural matters in dealing with planning applications and planning obligations.	
Status	Material Consideration in the determination of planning applications.	
Geographical coverage	Borough wide	
Chain of Conformity	Conforms with the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan specifically policy CS(R) 1 , 20, 21, HE1 and RD4 and National Planning Policy Framework	
<b>Timetable and Milestones</b>		
Start	Begin collation of evidence and start engaging stakeholders in the early preparation of the document	February 2025
SA Scoping	Consultation on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal	February 2025
Initial Consultation	Iterative process – identifying issues and options, developing preferred options and taking account of the evidence base	
Publication	Publish the final draft document and consult for 4 weeks on the content prior to adoption.	
Adoption	Document adopted and published	
<b>Arrangements for Production</b>		
Lead Department	Planning Policy	
Management arrangements	Executive Board approval will be required for public consultation on draft Plan(s). Full Council approval will be required for adoption.	
Resources	To be provided within the Planning Policy budget.	
Involving Stakeholders and Community	Consultation will be undertaken in line with the Regulations and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI 2020).	
<b>Post Production</b>		
Monitoring	Monitored by the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).	
Review	The effectiveness of this SPD will be reviewed through the data collected within the AMR.	

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

Document is Restricted

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

Document is Restricted



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

Document is Restricted

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

Document is Restricted