

HOUSING AND SAFER POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Housing and Safer Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 16 September 2025 at the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Fry (Chair), Carlin (Vice-Chair), Bramwell, Connolly, Garner, C. Loftus, L. Nolan, Ratcliffe and Teeling

Apologies for Absence: Councillor A. McInerney

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: S. Burrows, K. Butler, R. Freeman, N. Goodwin and H. Moir

Also in attendance: Councillor Wright in accordance with Standing Order Number 33.

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

SAF9 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reported that he had met with Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) on four separate occasions. He reported that he was now also a member of the Complaints Management Sub Committee, which had been established by the Police and Crime Panel to manage its responsibility for complaints.

As the Chair was unable to attend the last Police and Crime Panel meeting, the Vice-Chair attended on his behalf. The Vice-Chair gave feedback from this meeting and reported that the PCC Annual Report was discussed and this would be circulated to the Board for information and comments.

SAF10 MINUTES

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

SAF11 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.

SAF12 HOMELESSNESS WORKING PARTY - REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS SERVICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board received a report from the Executive Director – Adults which outlined the recommendations of the Homelessness Working Party's review of Halton's Homelessness services.

In February 2025, a Homelessness Working Party was established by Councillor Marie Wright in order to increase Elected Members' understanding on homelessness in Halton; the current service offer; pressures; data and how resources were mobilised to provide services that support some of the most vulnerable adults in the Borough.

The report described the scope of the review and its findings were attached as an appendix to the report; section 3.5 of the report outlined the recommendations of the Working Party.

The following additional information was provided in response to Members questions/comments:

- Nightstop was a UK wide network of same-night emergency accommodation services that support young people in crisis;
- The Council had a drop-in facility at the Halton Direct Links, where people who were either homeless or those facing being homeless, could speak to officers. The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) also had specialist officers who dealt with homelessness and mortgage issues. They also supported people who had to attend court. These services were advertised on the Council's website;
- It was suggested that Nightstop needed to be promoted more widely as it was of the view that not enough people knew about the service;
- The Council had a contract with White Chapel, a charity, who go out at night and identify rough sleepers. The Chair requested a briefing about this service;
- Councillor Loftus requested a standing item on every agenda which provided an update on homelessness. Officers confirmed that there was a performance report (item 6 on the agenda) that would provide this

information, however, the only gap was empty properties but consideration would be given to this being included on future reports. The performance report was a new item that the Board had never received before, however, going forward this would be provided to each meeting; and

- A Members Seminar on Asylum Seekers and Refugees was held in November 2024 and consideration would be given to repeating this Seminar in the future.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) endorse the recommendations of the Homelessness Working Party's review of Halton's Homelessness services.

Executive Director
of Adult Services

Director of
Community &
Greenspaces

SAF13 IMPROVING HOUSING STANDARDS IN THE PRIVATE RENTAL SECTOR: THE RENTERS' RIGHTS BILL

The Board received a report from the Director of Public Health which provided an update on the current measures in place to enforce standards in the Private Rental Sector and the new measures proposed in the Government's Renters' Rights Bill.

The 2011 Census reported that 11% of households in the Borough were in the private rental sector, however, the 2021 Census reported that this number had risen to 14%. In 2024, Metastreet, a housing research consultancy, was commissioned by the Council to undertake a study and this estimated that there were 11, 486 dwellings in the private rental sector which equated to 19% of the Borough's housing stock. The study also predicted that around 4,000 properties in Halton's private rental sector had at least one serious housing hazard.

It was noted that last year, the Council's Environmental Health Team received 172 complaints about housing conditions, which indicated that there was a significant under reporting by tenants. It was hoped that measures contained in the Renters Rights' Bill would provide tenants with more protection and therefore encourage more people to report issues. Furthermore, measures to proactively improve housing standards in the private rental sector, would be set out in the Council's new Housing Strategy, which was currently under consultation. Section 4 of the report set out current laws and policies in

place to help the Council enforce property standards and protect tenants.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) i.e. properties with 5 or more tenants required a license. There were currently 127 HMO's in the Borough, although there was an additional 73 smaller HMO's (3-4 tenants) that did not require a license. However, it was noted that there could potentially be more smaller HMO's, as there was no current requirement for landlords to notify the Council. The Board acknowledged that there were concerns amongst both residents and Elected Members about HMO's, however, they provided a valuable contribution to the housing market and provided much needed accommodation for single person households. Members were assured that once in place, the Housing Strategy would set out measures to control HMO's going forward.

In response to comments/questions from the Board, the following additional information was noted:

- Concerns were raised about expensive leasehold properties in the Borough and therefore the difficulties owners had in selling their homes which forced them into renting them out;
- An opportunity was being explored to establish a Housing Partnership Board which would consist of representatives from all housing associations;
- The regulations in the new Bill would not include lodgers; and
- Members of the Board were encouraged to respond to the new Housing Strategy, which was currently out on consultation.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SAF14 EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Board received the Emergency Planning Annual Report, which provided an update on the work undertaken by the Emergency Planning Team and the work programme for 2024/25.

The Emergency Planning Team consisted of an Emergency Planning Manager and two Emergency Planning Officers.

As a Local Authority, Halton had a statutory duty to comply with the following legislation:

- the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004;
- Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations (COMAH) 2015; and
- Pipeline Safety Regulations (PSR) 1996.

Members noted that Halton had a number of Emergency Plans in place with the aim to ensure resilience. These Plans were regularly updated and tested. The Board was advised on examples of local risks, details of the exercises that take place at COMAH sites in the Borough, information on Emergency Centres and the work the Emergency Planning Team carried out with partner agencies both within Cheshire and cross-border, and as part of Cheshire Resilience Forum.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SAF15 COUNTER TERRORISM

The Board received a report which provided an update on the role of Prevent and the work that had been undertaken during 2024/25 and the first quarter of 2025/26. The report also outlined the current actions being taken in regard to the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025.

Prevent was a National Programme that aimed to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism and it worked to ensure that people who were susceptible to radicalisation were offered appropriate interventions.

Some Prevent work is funded by the Home Office and delivered in the Liverpool City Region (LCR) through Liverpool City Council's Prevent Team. Halton's lead and point of contact was the Emergency Planning Manager and supported by the Director of Community and Greenspaces. Halton received no dedicated funding for Prevent.

The Home Office tested compliance via the Prevent benchmarking process as part of its annual assurance programme to monitor the delivery of Prevent and focussed on the following areas:

- Multi-Agency Partnership Group;
- Local Risk Assessment Process;
- Partnership Plan;
- Referral Pathway;
- Training Programme;
- Reducing permissive environments;
- Communications and engagement; and
- Channel Panel

It was confirmed by the Home Office in May 2025 that Halton had met all the criteria for the annual Prevent benchmarking exercise for 2024/25.

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, often referred to as PROTECT but most commonly known as Martyn's Law, was designed to improve public safety and required certain premises and events to prepare for terrorist attacks. Martyn's Law enacted in response to domestic terror attacks and inquiries like the Manchester Arena inquiry and aimed to enhance protective security and organisational preparedness across the UK.

Halton had an officer working group which was chaired by the Head of Service for Stadium and Markets. The Council had also engaged on the offer from Counter Terrorism Police to deliver training for Council employees. A number of sessions had taken place, which had included SCan Customer Facing and SCan training for CCTV operatives. The Stadium and Leisure Services had also engaged directly with the Police regarding advice and training for staff.

Following some questions from the Board it was confirmed that the Council were responsible for the Stadium and the event organisers were responsible for Creamfields.

It was also suggested that the Council should be notified of any events that happen in the Borough, however, this was not a mandatory requirement.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) endorse the action the Council is taking in regard to the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025.

SAF16 COMMUNITY SAFETY DIVISION - ENFORCEMENT & CCTV UPDATE

The Board received a report from the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on progress and work programme in the Community Safety and Protection Division.

The report provided an update on:

- Environmental Crime and Waste Enforcement;

- Anti-Social Behaviour; and
- CCTV.

Concerns were raised about fly tipping. It was noted that some residents whose wheelie bins had gone missing, could not afford to pay for a replacement and therefore would put rubbish bags out. Another concern was the booking system in place for bulky rubbish; residents would only be allocated a collection date once they had paid for the service. Officers confirmed that the Council had a hardship discretion but concerns would be fed back to the team.

It was also noted that the Police Crime Commissioner was keen to use drones to track and recover stolen bikes and to tackle illegal or antisocial bike and e-scooter use. Drones were a safer alternative to traditional pursuits, which could be dangerous for riders, officers, and the public.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Director of
Community &
Greenspaces

SAF17 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 1 OF 2025/26

The Board received the Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter 1 of 2025/26.

The key priorities for development of improvement in 2025/26 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans for the various function areas reported to the Board as detailed below:

- Community Safety and Protection;
- Risk and Emergency Planning;
- Drug and Alcohol Action;
- Domestic Violence; and
- Housing.

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

It was noted that this was the first performance report to be received by the Board. There would be some changes to Domestic Violence KPI's going forward consideration would be given to include empty homes on future reports.

Concerns were raised that when looking at crime figures, the Police wards did not match up with Council wards. It was agreed that this was a challenge and the

Chair agreed to raise this at his next meeting with Police.

RESOLVED: That the quarter 1 performance management report be received and noted.

SAF18 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 31 MAY 2025

The Board received a copy of a report, which was presented to the Council's Executive Board on 10 July 2025. The report outlined the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position as at 31 May 2025, together with the latest 2025/26 outturn forecast. The report also described the reasons for key variances from budget.

The Executive Board had requested that a copy of the report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board for information, to ensure that all Members had a full appreciation of the Councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility.

RESOLVED: That the Council's overall spending position as at 31 May 2025, as outlined in the report, be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.20 p.m.