

Directorate Overview Report – Chief Executive’s Directorate Quarter 4

Reporting Period: 01st January – 31st March 2024

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Key Developments

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

Financial Services

2.2 Benefits Division

Processing Times

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

Universal Credit – Managed Migration 2024/25

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

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

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

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

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

2.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

Supplier Invoice Processing Performance

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

Early Payment Scheme

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

Insurance tender

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

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

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

Customer payments

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

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

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

2.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

2023/24 Quarter 3 Financial Monitoring

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

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

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

2022/23 Statement of Accounts

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

Council Tax and Business Rate Collection

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

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

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

2.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

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

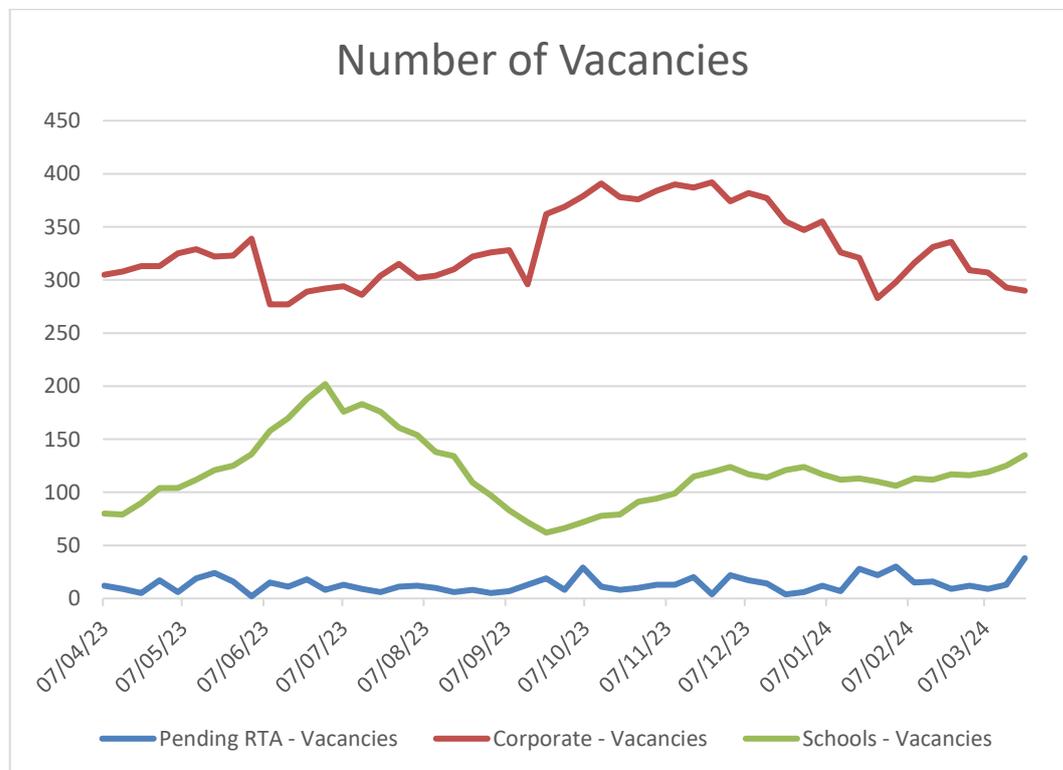
The services within the HR Operations Division (Resourcing & Recruitment, Payroll & Pensions, Health & Safety and Business Partnering) remain under significant pressure in the current year. Additional demand persists across all areas.

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

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

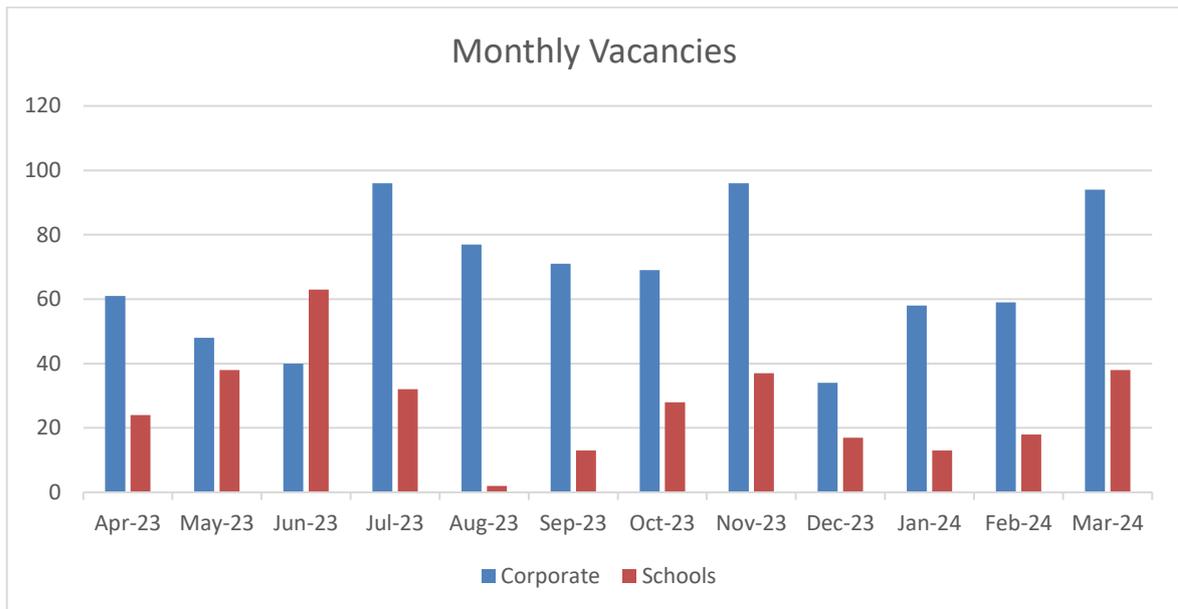
Agency usage remains high, work has been carried out to on-board all care homes to reduce off contract agency spend with clear processes for requesting an agency worker. This process is now part of the HR Operations as business as usual to challenge operational service areas to seek solutions to bring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

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



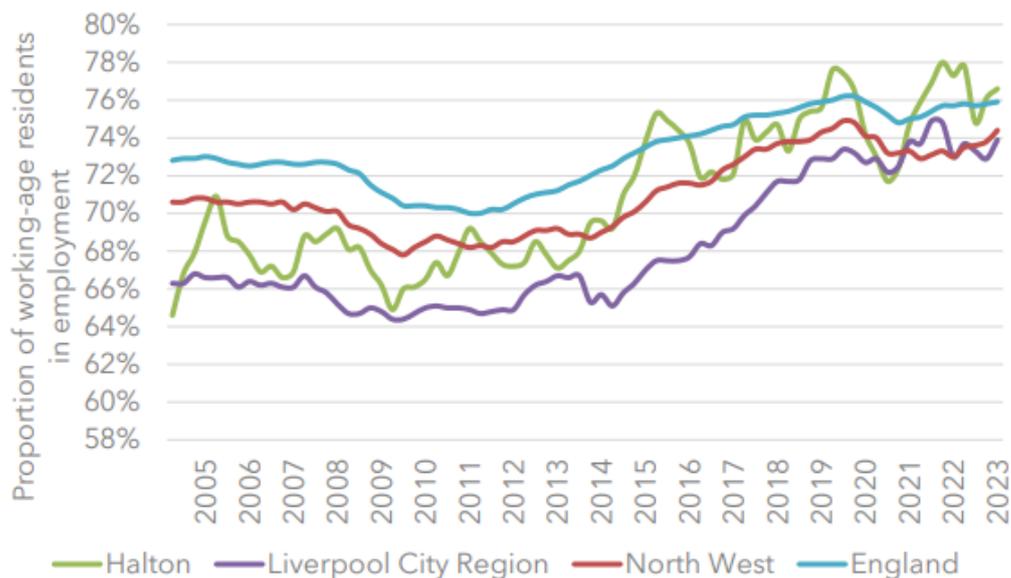
At the time of writing, there are 306 Council vacancies in the recruitment workflow inclusive of usual recruitment, 'Adults Always On' campaign, 'Indeed' campaign, and 138 school vacancies in progress. The graph below shows vacancies for corporate and schools month on month for 2023/24.

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



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

Employment rate



2.6 ICT and Administration

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.7 Legal and Democracy

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

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

2.8 Catering - School Meals

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

2.9 Stadium

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stadium & Catering (New Division)

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

2.10 Registration Services

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

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

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

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

2.11 Property Services (Operations)

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

Education SEMH Resource base projects

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

Demolition of the Waterloo Building, Runcorn

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

Runcorn Waterfront Scheme

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

3.0 Emerging Issues

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

3.2 Finance - Benefits Division

Household Support Fund 5

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

3.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

Procurement Act

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

2023/24 Statement of Accounts

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

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

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

Amongst the conclusions made by the Committee included:

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

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

There were a number of recommendations made including:

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

3.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

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

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

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

3.6 ICT

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.7 Legal and Democracy

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

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

3.8 Catering - School Meals

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

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

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

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

3.9 Stadium

Contractual Negotiations

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

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

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

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

3.10 Registration Services

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

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

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

3.11 Property Services (Operations)

Protect Duty

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

Accommodation review

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

Carbon emission targets

Halton's Climate Change Action Plan has set a target for the Council's own carbon emissions to reach net zero by 2040 which is the same as Liverpool City region. Two bids were submitted in November to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), the first covering St Luke's and St Pat's care homes the second covering, Runcorn Town Hall, Kingsway Learning Centre and Picow Farm depot. It was anticipated that the outcome of the bids would be announced in April and presented in Quarter 1 return 2024/2025, however by way of an update both lots of bids for nursing homes and the 3 buildings were unsuccessful.

4.0 High Priority Equality Actions

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

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

5.0 Performance Overview

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

Financial Management

Key Objectives / milestones

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Objectives / milestones

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

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

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

Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
<p>Establish 20 new apprentice placements within Council services, utilising existing vacancies, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.</p> <p>The Council remains committed to establishing apprenticeship placements should additional monies be made available.</p>		<p>Target has been missed, although the work required on this agenda is advanced. A specification for resources to support this agenda has been created and a funding model is being developed to enable that to be put in place. This will provide dedicated support to managers who wish to bring apprentices into existing vacancies and provide for a systematic approach to career development. Implementation will be linked to the transformation project around workforce</p> <p>The Council has created 5 new apprentice placements during the year.</p>
<p>Establish 20 new existing employee apprenticeships to enable up-skilling in a range of business areas, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.</p>		<p>16 conversions this quarter, taking total up to 26 in this current financial year.</p>

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Performance Indicators

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

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

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

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

Key Objectives / milestones

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Legal & Democracy

Key Objectives / milestones

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

Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Review constitution - May 2023 .		The revised Constitution was approved at Annual Council.

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

Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
To ensure that all members have been given the opportunity of a having a MAP meeting where desired.		All Members have been offered a MAP meeting.
To induct all new members by October 2023 .		All new Members have been inducted.

Key Performance Indicators

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

Community & Environment

Key Objectives / milestones

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Performance Indicators

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

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

Property Services

Key Objectives / milestones

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

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

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

Ref	Objective
EEP 08	Corporate Priority: To design, manage and improve processes to generate increasing value for customers and other stakeholders.

	To undertake Employee Reviews for all staff
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Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
All EDRs to be completed by September 23		Completed

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

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

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

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

Groundbreaking Q1 2024 2025		The start on site is likely to be delayed by the funding situation.
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Key Performance Indicators

STRATEGIC ISSUES	BASELINE POSITION	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 1 2024	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 3 2027	INTERVENTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
High Unemployment	2.7% of economically active people are unemployed (2021 Census)	In March 2024, Halton had 17,041 people claiming Universal Credit. Halton has the highest proportion of claimants across City Region.	Ends 2027	HBC's contribution: HPIJ delivery of Welfare to Work & Health programmes (Ways to Work, Restart, Work & Health, Pioneer Programme and Supported Internships Programme)	Percentage unemployed (aged 16-64 years). Percentage of economically inactive of working age
Low wage residents	Data not available from Census 21? Data from Adzuna – median salary in Halton is £26,000 which is 14.3% less than the national average of £30,000 (although there has been a YOY increase of 8% in Halton)	Data from Adzuna – median salary in Halton is £29,139, which is an increase of £3139 from the previous year (10.6%). It is 11.8% less than the overall national salary of £33,033 (an improvement of 2.5% on previous year)	Ends 2027	Employers signing up to the LCR Fair Employment Charter	Percentage of employees' earnings below real living wage.
Low-income households	Data??			HBC's contributions: HPIJ delivery of Welfare to Work & Health programmes (Ways to Work, Restart, Work & Health, Pioneer Programme and Supported	Percentage employees who are local (FTE) employed on contract for one year or the whole duration of the contract, whichever is shorter.

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

Climate change agenda and carbon emissions	CO2 emissions for 2022/23 amounted to 8740 tonnes.	Reduce emissions by 1%	Reduce emissions by 5%	<p>Submit a funding bid and obtain funding to carry out decarbonisation works to various buildings.</p> <p>Continue to deliver the LED lighting replacement programme.</p> <p>Carry out further rationalisation of our property portfolio to reduce emissions.</p> <p>Help carry out education programme for officers and Members alike</p>	Percentage reduction in CO2 emissions from Council activities. The emissions for 2022/23 were 6.29% lower than for the previous year.
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OPERATIONAL ISSUES	BASELINE POSITION	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 1	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 3	INTERVENTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Low skills levels in LSOAs are not being addressed in line with need.	No. of unemployed of working age population compared to number of actual HBC Adult Learning enrolments (Top 5 LSOAs)	Central and West Bank - 43% Appleton and Halton View - 40% Grange –25% Halton Lea – 38% Q4 Update	Central and West Bank – 48% Appleton and Halton View - 45% Grange – 35% Halton Lea – 43%	HBC’s contribution: Targeted marketing of LSOAs – working with Customer Intelligence Team and use of Adzuna dashboard. Outreach and engagement schedule.	To increase the number of Adult Learning enrolments from residents aged 19+ living in Halton’s LSOA areas

	<p>for unemployment)</p> <p>Central and West Bank – 145 claimants, only 56 enrolled (38%)</p> <p>Appleton and Halton View – 100 claimants, only 35 enrolled (35%)</p> <p>Grange – 95 claimants, only 17 enrolled (18%)</p> <p>Halton Lea – 90 claimants, only 30 enrolled (38%)</p>	<p>Central and West Bank 41.5%</p> <p>Appleton 38.6%</p> <p>Halton View 40.7%</p> <p>Grange 45%</p> <p>Halton Lea 46.1%</p>			
<p>The number of HBC adult learning withdrawals has shown a year-on-year increase. Withdrawals adversely affect income levels.</p>	<p>14% overall withdrawals in the year 21/22</p>	<p>12%</p> <p>Q4 Update 5% currently (academic year so far)</p>	<p>10%</p>	<p>HBC's contribution: Early intervention for learner issues. Implementation of 'Extensions in Learning' process. Reviewed onboarding process – distance learning.</p>	<p>To reduce the number of withdrawals in the Adult Learning Service</p>
<p>Halton adult Learner Voice does not consistently get used to promote the service</p>	<p>19 limited detail success stories provided in 21/22. Format does not showcase effectively the impact of the service</p>	<p>12 Meaningful case studies</p> <p>Q4 Update 9 total – 6 social media celebrations and 3 Learner of the month celebrations with half of the academic year to go.</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>Annual marketing strategy. Promotional videos of learning.</p>	<p>To increase the number of Adult Learning Case Studies produced each year</p>

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

					“legacy” benefits or those within specific conditionality regimes in Universal Credit: The former includes Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Income Support (IS). The latter includes claimants within the Preparation Requirement or Work Focused Interview Requirement conditionality regimes.
Marketing and promotion of HPIJ services for programmes that allow self-referrals is inconsistent	Ad-hoc partnership working across the Borough Leaflets posters and and stands displayed across community venues for some programmes but not all	48 Q4 update Minimum of 50 activities took place across the HPIJ team	48	Attendance at Jobcentres on a weekly basis Attendance at partner/community events Attendance at Jobs Fairs Increased social media presence and followers Increase to at least four marketing activities per month	To deliver an annual programme of outreach and engagement activities to market and promote HPIJ programmes that local residents can self-refer to
Place Based Business Support Programme Delivered Targeted flexible place-based business support for	Lead Officer nominated. Specialist advice commissioned in order to support businesses	9	58	Diagnostic sessions performed by trained staff and appropriate support sources for the business. Specific support can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy • Corporate Marketing • Procurement 	Diagnostic approved by CA April 2024. Business Start Website agreed March 2024.

existing businesses with growth ambitions and employment potential which provide equitable access across the city region. To include all businesses including social enterprises				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance • Access to funding • Business Start • Digital Marketing 	
To provide support to Start-ups, with a focus on enterprise ready entrepreneurs (within 3 months of establishing a business) and a focus on founders who are looking to employ people within 24 months, export and/or generate high turnover growth. To include all businesses including social enterprises.	This service is currently not delivered by Halton BC	5	11	Business Starts being delivered in all sectors (non-specialised)	TBA by CA
Programmes Office fully resourced	Programmes Office established Oct 1 st , 2022. Two positions remain unfilled.	Team fully recruited and operational. Programmes Office systems fully embedded in EEP Dept.	Programmes Office systems fully established across the Council.	Full team recruited. Roles and Responsibilities fully understood by Dept. New systems established – see strategic issue above.	to establish the Programmes Office Team, ensuring the full team is in place and competent, with clear roles and responsibilities.
Externally Funded schemes	Programmes Office established as monitors of the	Two claims successfully submitted and	Six claims successfully submitted and annual	Regular Town Deal catch ups with relevant staff.	To ensure effective systems are in place and

effectively monitored	Town Deal programme.	annual draw down received. GFAs issued to relevant projects. Roles and Responsibilities clearly allocated and understood.	drawdowns received. No clawback/issues. Audit issues successfully dealt with.	Roles allocated and understood within Programmes Office. Systems established to successfully record and complete claims.	understood for the monitoring of the Town Deal programme to minimise the risk of clawback/non-compliance.
Reduction in Market occupancy levels	Market Hall 92% occupied at 31 st Dec 2022	Maintain occupancy at 92%	Increase occupancy to 95%	Continue to promote the Market as a positive location to trade from. Maintain competitive rental rates compared to other town centre rental costs	The Market Hall occupancy is at 87.6% as of 31 st March 2024. The slight reduction is down to the continued difficult trading conditions. There have been a number of recent enquiries, so we are anticipating this figure increasing in due course.
Reducing Ex-Trader Market Debt.	£29,833.69 as at 13 th March 2023	Reduce debt by 5%	Reduce debt by 15%	Continue to work with the finance recovery team to put payment plans in place. Continue to actively manage existing traders' debt so they are not in debt if they decide to leave the Market.	Percentage of Ex-Trader debt outstanding. The figure at year end has increased slightly to £30,971, this is as a result of a couple of traders leaving within the year with some outstanding debt.
Level of satisfaction with repair & maintenance service delivered via the FM team	75% of surveys returned were rated as either good or excellent	80% Of surveys returned rated as either good or excellent	85% Of surveys returned rated as either good or excellent	Issue questionnaires to building managers in order to rate the level of service provided. Continue to deliver a repairs and maintenance service in a timely manner,	Percentage of surveys returned in 2023/24 where the service was rated as either good or excellent was in excess of the

				with quality contractors. Continue with the procurement of contractors, when necessary, based on best value principles.	85% target figure.
Continued Successful Delivery of Capital schemes if workload increases due to accelerated regeneration	3 Projects Managers currently in post managing external consultants to help deliver various schemes	90% of schemes delivered within the contractual completion date and within the contract sum.	95% of schemes delivered within the contractual completion date and within the contract sum.	Additional Lead Officer post created with Lead Officer now appointed. Currently 2 vacant project manager posts however, with 1 agency surveyor covering in the interim. Increased use of consultants to help deliver various schemes	Monitoring successful delivery of individual projects within work programme. Over 90% of projects completed were delivered on time and within the contract sum.

70. Financial Statements

Finance Department

Revenue Budget as at 31 March 2024

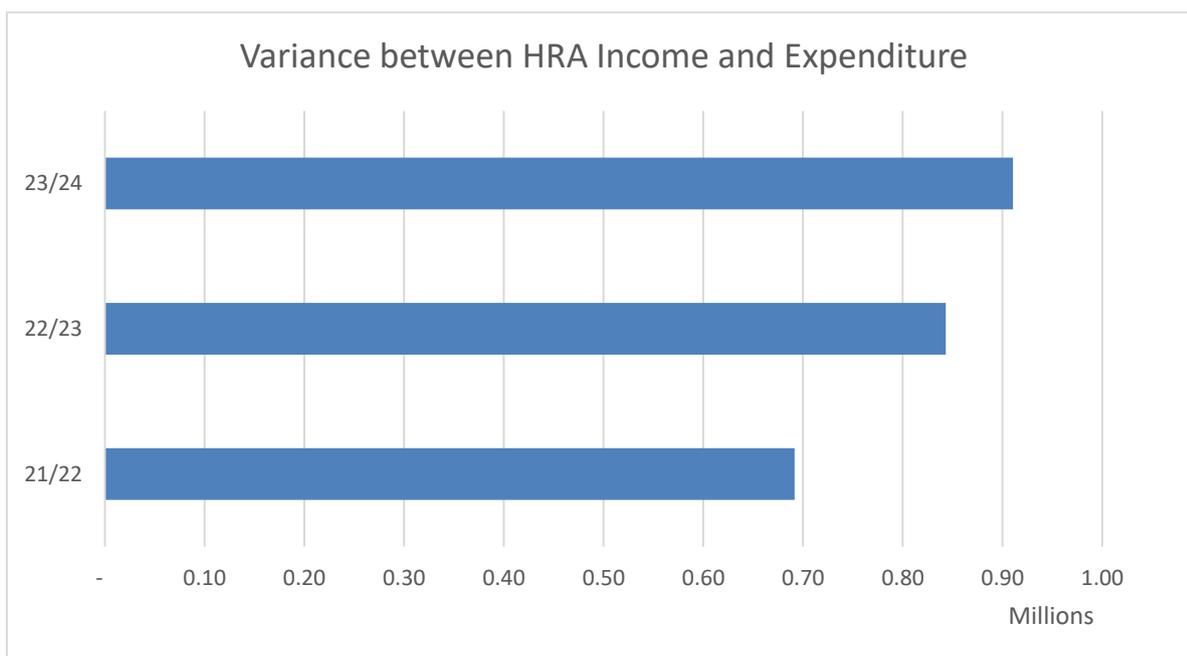
	Annual Budget	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure			
Employees	6,500	6,415	85
Insurances	1,039	1,048	(9)
Supplies & Services	446	406	40
Rent Allowances	30,945	30,945	0
Concessionary Travel	1,748	1,684	64
Non HRA Rent Rebates	51	51	0
Discretionary Social Fund	73	6	67
Discretionary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

Comments on the above figures

As at 31st March the Finance Department is reporting an overspend against budget of £0.209m. Finance as a department is underspent at year end on the majority of account classifications, however increasing pressures on Housing Benefits, and the need to increase the bad debt provision

for Council Tax Liability Orders is so significant that any areas of underspend must be utilised to help mitigate the pressures faced by those 2 areas.

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



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

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

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

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

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

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

Progress Against Agreed Savings

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

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

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

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

Chief Executive's Delivery Unit

Revenue Budget as at 31 March 2024

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

Comments on the above figures

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

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

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

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

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

Capital Projects as at 31 March 2024

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

Comments on the above figures

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

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

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

CHIEF EXECUTIVES DELIVERY UNIT

APPENDIX A

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

ICT and Administration Department

Revenue Budget as at 31 March 2024

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

Comments on the above figures

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

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

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

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

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

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

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

Capital Projects as at 31 March 2024

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

Comments on the above figures

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

**ICT AND SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT
APPENDIX A**

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

Legal and Democratic Services Department

Revenue Budget as at 31 March 2024

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

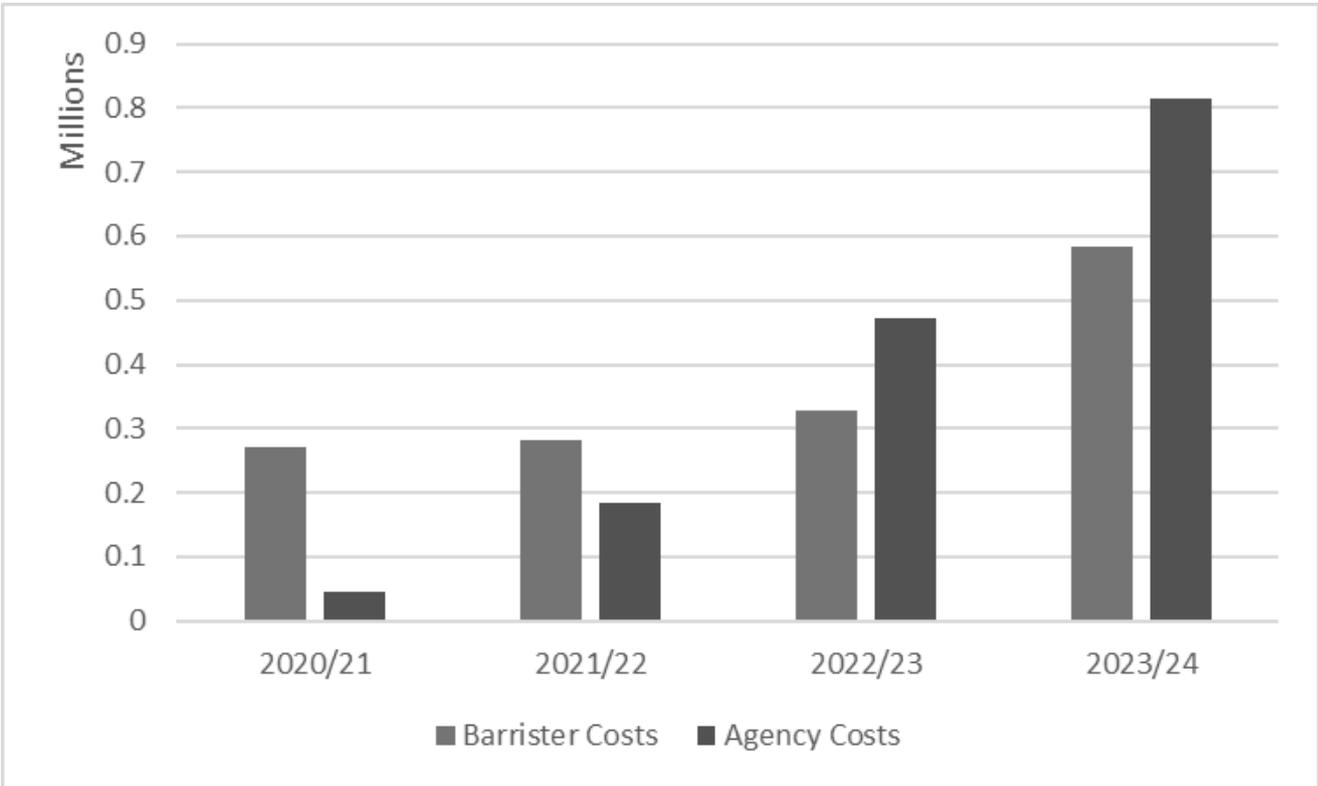
Comments on the above figures

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

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

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

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



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

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

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

COMMUNITY & GREENSPACE

Revenue Budget as at 31 March 2024

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

Comments on the above figures

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Capital Projects as at 31 March 2024

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

Comments on the above figures

Stadium Minor Works

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

Open Spaces Schemes

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

Children's Playground Equipment

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

Town Park

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

Spike Island / Wigg Island

Consultants have now been appointed and the scheme is underway.

Pickerings Pasture Café

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

Halton Leisure Centre

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

Brookvale Recreation Centre Pitch

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

ECONOMY ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

Revenue Operational Budget at 31 March 2024

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

Comments on the above figures

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

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

Comparison to Previous Quarter

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

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

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

Supporting Information

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

ECONOMY ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

Capital Projects as of 31 March 24

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Runcorn Station Development

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

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

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

8.0 Application of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress Symbols

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

Direction of Travel Indicator

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