

Environment & Urban Renewal PPB – Priority Based Monitoring Report Q2

Reporting Period: 1st July to 30th September 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 second quarter of 2024 / 25 for service areas within the remit of the Environment and Urban Renewal Directorates (EUR) Policy and Performance Board.
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2024 - 25 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans, for the various functional areas reporting to Environment and Urban Renewal Directorates (EUR) Policy & Performance Board i.e.
- Economy, Enterprise & Property extracts for **Development & Investment Services including Regeneration and External Funding**
 - Policy, Planning & Transportation extracts for **Highways & Transportation, Logistics & Transport Management (incl. Road Safety), and Building Control & Contaminated Land.**
 - Community & Environment extracts for **Waste & Environmental Improvement Open Spaces (including Cemeteries & Crematoria)**
- 1.3 The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress to date is explained within Section 5 of this report.
- 1.4 Corporate Priorities



Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029
Our Community, Our Priorities, Our Future

Plan on a Page



2.0 High Priority Equality Actions

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 The Councils latest annual progress report in relation to the achievement of its equality objectives is published on the Council website and is available via:
<http://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/Equality-and-Diversity.aspx>






3.0 Performance Overview

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.




Development & Investment Services including Regeneration and External Funding

Key Objectives / milestones





Corporate Priority	Priority 2 – Building a strong sustainable local economy. Regeneration
ERD 01	Regeneration of Widnes Town Centre



Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Secure Liverpool City Region (LCR) capacity funding by June 2024		Approved in principle, waiting for the legal agreement from LCR.
Develop & agree project brief by the end of June 2024		This was concluded at end of July 2024 after the identification of additional budget.
Start procurement process in July 2024		This was slightly delayed due to time required to develop brief and secure additional funding. A new member of staff starting 1 st August picked up this work which is now completed.
Agree first draft of Framework - March 2025		On Track
Present Widnes Town Centre Regeneration Framework to Town Panel by March 2025		On Track

Corporate Priority	Priority 2 – Building a strong sustainable local economy Regeneration
ERD 02	Regeneration of Runcorn Town Centre




Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Board member submission to DLUHC by 1 st June.		Information submitted to DLUHC. Currently waiting for feedback and approval confirmation which has been delayed due to the General Election.
Submission to DLUHC by 1 st November 2024		Arcadis and PLACED have been appointed to provide consultancy support and conduct public engagement work on behalf of the board. We are waiting for revised information on the submission requirements and deadline from Government
Agree 10-year vision and 3-year investment plan by March 2025		On Track




Corporate Priority	Priority 2 – Building a strong sustainable local economy Regeneration
ERD 03	Support development & growth at Sci-tech Daresbury

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Assist JV to secure funding from the CA by July 2024		Ongoing discussions with the CA in relation to development appraisal and costs. Have agreed to submit Outline Business Case in Q3 for review.
Secure Investment Zone funding by September 2024		Funding is secured in principle subject to Full Business Case. Anticipate funding to be secured in Q4.
Commence delivery of Project Violet Phase 2 – October 2024		Due to increase in the viability gap, the project has been re-appraised. As a result, further funding is required to deliver the scheme and the procurement exercise will be restarted. A start anticipated for August 2025.
Confirm funding arrangements for long term expansion by December 2024		The use of the Enterprise Zone Funding mechanism is likely to be able to support the costs of the land acquisition for the long-term expansion of the campus.







Report to Exec Board Q3 2024-25		Work is ongoing to compile all the necessary supporting information with an aim to submit a detailed report in Q3.
Agreed funding package for Project Violet by September 2024		As stated, the viability gap increase means that the project has been re-appraised and further work is required to confirm the funding package for delivery.

Corporate Priority	Priority Six – Valuing and Appreciating Halton and our Community Regeneration
ERD 04	Providing new homes that meet Halton’s needs


Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Sign the MOU by August 2024		Achieved - At its meeting on 11 th July 2024, Executive Board approved entering a Strategic Place Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with partners, leading to production of a Business Plan and new governance arrangements to be established. See Report: Liverpool City Region Strategic Place Partnership.pdf (halton.gov.uk)
Agreeing Halton’s Place Priorities by September 2024		Achieved - At meeting on 11th July 2024, Executive Board provided delegated authority to the Director of Economy, Enterprise and Property, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Climate Change, to agree details for the formation of the Strategic Place Partnership and finalise Halton’s Priorities. Halton Place Priorities were presented as a draft ‘Place on a Page’ to Executive Board. The Strategic Place Partnership Interim Business Plan, including Halton’s Place Priorities, were approved at the Housing and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR CA) first meeting of Strategic Place Partnership Board. This was held on the 13 th September 2024.
Establish Place Group by October 2024		Achieved - The Halton Place Group is an Officer level meeting held quarterly with representation from the LCR CA and Homes England (HE). The Council lead is the Director of Economy, Enterprise and Property. Council Officer representation on the Halton Place Group has now been agreed.






		The LCR CA have confirmed the first meeting of the Place Group is scheduled to be held in October 2024.
Produce a housing project pipeline, in line with Halton Place Priorities, by March 2025		Housing project pipeline will reflect the priorities identified within the Halton 'Place on Page'. Pipeline drafting has commenced, awaiting information requirements from LCR CA to progress. This will form part of the Halton Place Group which is scheduled to be held in October 2024.
Secure first draft of Housing Strategy by March 2025		At its meeting on 18 th April 2024, Executive Board approved production of a new Borough wide Housing Strategy and supporting evidence base. See Report: ProductionofBoroughwideHousingStrategy.pdf (halton.gov.uk) Following a formal procurement process, specialist housing consultancy Arc4 were appointed in September 2024. The timeline for production is currently being finalised and it is anticipated that a first draft of the Housing Strategy will be prepared by March 2025.
Production of Housing Strategy by March 2025		Production of the Housing Strategy commenced in September 2024. The first stage of the production process is preparing the evidence base for the Strategy. The evidence base includes producing a Housing Needs Assessment, supported by survey of households in Halton. The whole production process for the Housing Strategy is anticipated to take 12 months, including stakeholder and public consultation. The final Housing Strategy being published in September 2025.

Corporate Priority	Priority Two – Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy Business Investment & Growth
ERD 05	To provide support to all Halton’s businesses and encourage start-ups.



Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Deliver four sector network events and two business events by March 2025		Two sector networks operational by Quarter 2 2024 - 2025 (Green Growth and Logistics) Advanced Manufacturing due to progress by the end of Quarter 3 and ICT by the end of Quarter 4
Carry out 150 diagnostics by March 25		More than 100 diagnostics have been arranged by the end of Quarter 2 2024 – 2025.
Provide support to forty-seven town centre businesses by March 25		Programme progressing well. The first two stages are finalised (diagnostic design and audit) with support now being delivered to town centre businesses.
Provide support to 67 Halton businesses by March 25		As of the end of Quarter 2 2024 – 2025 49 businesses have received support from the Business Support Service.
Provide support to 114 businesses across the Borough by March 2025		On track to achieve this target as illustrated by the two measures above. 114 will be supported by March 2025.
Support sixteen business startups by March 2025		Six businesses have started up and four are due to start trading in October. Therefore, we forecast the additional six to achieve the target will be achieved over the 5 remaining months.

Corporate Priority	Priority One – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence Programmes Office
ERD 06	Maximise new external funding opportunities and effectively manage and monitor existing funding programmes


Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Produce monthly funding bulletins.		Monthly bulletins produced and widely distributed; additional climate change funding bulletin produced to support the climate change action plan steering group. Review to be undertaken to ensure all managers in the Directorate receive and cascade the bulletins.

Deliver quarterly training sessions for colleagues.		This has been put on hold due to gaps in staffing; this will be a priority for Quarter 3 to pick this up again and develop a programme of sessions to March 2025.
Submit compliant claims for all grant programmes		All claims submitted on time and compliant; substantial work is being undertaken to ensure compliance on some of the UKSPF strands
Report annual financial position to Corporate PPB in July 2024		This was taken in September as the agenda was too full in July. Report well received and subsequent queries responded to.
Produce a pipeline of future regeneration projects to maximise the potential to secure future funding by October 2024		Delayed due to discussions on project types and status; at the end of the quarter 20 out of 34 project profiles had been submitted. These will be uploaded to a central spreadsheet.
Agree pipeline with members and the CA by March 2025		See item above; pipeline needs to be agreed internally and then presented to members and CA




Corporate Priority	<p>Priority One – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence.</p> <p>Priority Two – Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy.</p> <p>Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families.</p> <p>Priority Four - Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need.</p> <p>Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future.</p> <p>Priority Six - Valuing and Appreciating Halton and our Community</p> <p>Planning & Development</p>
ERD 13	Create and maintain statutory plans, generated through community consultation, that guide decisions on future development proposals and address the needs and opportunities of the area

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Delivery during the plan period (2037)		Local Development Strategy agreed 6 SPDs identified within the work programme and quarterly updates given
As per Local Plan Monitoring Framework & Annual Monitoring Report		Annual AMR reporting to Environment and Urban renewal PPB reported on time.


Corporate Priority	Priority Two – Building a Strong Sustainable Local Economy. Planning & Development
ERD 14	Providing new homes that meet Halton’s needs

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Granting of planning permission for housing and other forms of accommodation		A total of 4 applications have been approved for residential development for a range of application types such as Outline, Full and a S73 applications.

Corporate Priority	Priority Two – Building a Strong Sustainable Local Economy. Planning & Development
ERD 15	Provide an efficient Planning service that supports business investment in Halton



Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
60% major determined within 13 weeks (or agreed extension)		100% - 6 of 6 Applications therefore above target
70% minor application determined in 8 weeks (or agreed extension)		87.5% - 14 of 16 Applications therefore above target
70% other application determined in 8 weeks (or agreed extension)		98% - 51 of 52 Applications therefore above target

Corporate Priority	Priority Five - Working Towards a Greener Future Planning & Development
ERD 16	Provide improvements to Biodiversity




Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
The amount of BNG secured as part of planning applications.		Applications have been received that are expected to be liable for BNG, but none yet determined




Highways & Transportation, Logistics & Transport Management

Corporate Priority	Priority Four - Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need. Logistics
ERD 17	Deliver travel choices that are safe, inclusive, affordable, and low carbon


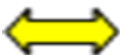
Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Percentage number of public transport journeys on-time at intermediate timing points Baseline 87% Target 95%	 85.55	Although the indicator has still not achieved the baseline target it has remained stable against Q1. Further liaison with the bus operators is required to identify a way forward to improve the performance.
Percentage number of public transport journeys departing the terminus on-time Baseline 96% Target 97%	 100	This indicator has performed exceptionally well this quarter achieving 100% compliance.

Corporate Priority	Priority Four - Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need. Logistics
ERD 18	Maintain Corporate Fleet Availability


Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Number of vehicle maintenance & safety inspections completed within the statutory timeframe.		All safety inspections completed within the scheduled planned maintenance program that ensures compliance with the statutory requirements of the Council's Operator's Licence. 100% achieved in reporting period.
Number of litres of diesel consumed.		107,640 amount of diesel used for the period 01/07/2024 to 30/09/2024
Number of Community Meals delivered within the two-hour timeframe.		9177 total number of hot/cold meals delivered to vulnerable individuals.


Number of student passenger journeys		20,863 Calculated on actual school days in period (down on last period due to summer holidays)
Number of school transport routes		160 averages of total during reporting period.
Cost of externally contracted school transport		£430.711, total cost for period (down on last period due to summer holidays)

Corporate Priority	Priority One - Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Logistics
ERD 19	Deliver travel choices that are safe, inclusive, affordable, and low carbon.







Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Number of referrals for travel training and number of successful uptakes from the referrals.	 11(8)	11 referrals during the reporting period with 8 individuals (72.7%) taking up the travel training offer.
Number of students who engage in group classroom and outdoor tailored practical sessions.	 57	57 individuals have taken part in weekly classroom-based sessions, 5 have taken part in weekly outdoor practical group sessions and 17 individuals have taken part in 1-2-1 ITT sessions in the same time frame.

Corporate Priority	Priority Five - Working Towards a Greener Future Highways
ERD 20	Deliver travel choices that are safe, inclusive, affordable, and low carbon







Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Securing and Investing funding in Travel schemes		Same as last quarter in terms of securing funding. A consultation was carried out during June on a proposed Wilmere Lane Birchfield Rd Active travel scheme (likely to be CRSTS funded with design work to date funded by ATE capability funding streams). Also, the Halton Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) documents have now been completed (which will be reported to PPB for endorsement in due course)

Length of schemes implemented / delivered.		312m of Cycle route on the Runcorn Busway utilising ATF3 funding completed

Corporate Priority	Priority Five - Working Towards a Greener Future Highways
ERD 21	Deliver travel choices that are safe, inclusive, affordable, and low carbon



Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Securing and Investing funding in highway maintenance to protect the asset.		Three GFA's at Octobers Exec Board for acceptance and investment in the Highway asset
Total length of highway asset		Same as last quarter
Length of maintenance schemes implemented / delivered.		492m Prescott Road resurfacing and footway works. 146m Kingsway footway works
Value of insurance claims for highways defects		£17,949 paid out over the last quarter including solicitor's costs, damages and disbursements
Number of bridges and structures maintained		Underside of SJB bridge deck painting works due to complete end of October.
Number of streetlights maintained		138 Streetlights with maintenance works, not bollards or illuminated signs

Corporate Priority	Priority One – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence Traffic
ERD 22	Deliver travel choices that are safe, inclusive, affordable, and low carbon


Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Programme of education relating to road safety		<p>KS14x Summer road safety workshops in 2 x Community Centres. Very well attended by children, mainly KS1 / KS 2</p> <p>KS2Ped training x 6 classes in schools</p> <p>Junior Safety Officers initiative launch - approximately 30 primary schools on board tally up in process.</p> <p>KS3Enrichment Week x 2</p> <p>Joint working day Morrisons Widnes - tyre safety - mixed ages gen public came to chat. Traffic / pedestrian counts at all SXP sites undertaken, to determine priority list etc.2 road safety days in local colleges, Training of 2 new SXPs</p>
Safety cameras and speed indication devices		16 SiDS, 24 speed activated signs. 3 SiDs currently not operating and options for repair / replacement being explored. Currently 13 No. mobile camera site and 8 No. static cameras in the Borough.
Analysis of collision sites		A number of sites have been identified and accident remedial schemes being drawn up. A number of smaller scale works already complete as well as work on new and upgraded mobile speed camera sites.
Road safety audits for new schemes		No new RSA undertaken in Q2
Number of school crossing patrols		<p>21 school crossing patrols</p> <p>1 mobile</p> <p>1 casual</p>
Number of bike-ability training sessions delivered		364, plus 64 cycle training sessions delivered by HBC Road Safety during school holidays
Number of safety cameras		Currently 13 No. mobile camera site and 8 No. static cameras in the Borough.

Waste, Open Spaces, Cemeteries & Crematoriums


Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future Environment Services
ERD 27	Provide a clean, safe, and attractive environment

Milestone: Carry out Land Audit Management Surveys (LAMS) to assess the standard and quality of the Council's Parks, Cemeteries and Public Realm.	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Ensure that, as a minimum, inspections are carried out bi-monthly throughout the year with results uploaded to the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) for benchmarking purposes.		45 inspections on sites chosen at random have been completed during August and September 2024. 10 Grade A, 31 Grade B, 4 Grade C
Quality Standard Scores - reported Annually to the relevant PPB.		Training completed on 2 nd May



Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future Environment Services
ERD 28	Safety within Parks and Open Spaces

Milestone: Carry out planned equipment and safety inspections at playgrounds and Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) in the Council's parks and public open spaces.	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
% of playgrounds, play equipment and MUGAs inspected in accordance with planned safety inspection schedules		In Q2, a total of 1072 inspections were carried out. This is against a scheduled target of 960. The completion rate is over 100% and is due to carrying out further inspections when revisiting sites to complete repairs on equipment.


Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future Environment Services
ERD 29	Increase the Council’s recycling rate and reduce the amount of waste produced per household

Milestone: Quarterly updates on progress and annual performance data statistics to be reported to the relevant PPB by 31st March 2025.	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Kgs of waste produced per household and % of waste recycled – reported annually to the relevant PPB.		Waste production is subject to seasonal variation. This is an estimated figure, but it does show that waste levels per household in Q2 (310kgs) are slightly higher than those in Q2 in the previous year (302kgs). This is an estimated figure, but it does show that recycling levels in Q2 (39.1%) are slightly higher than in Q2 in the previous year (38.8%).


Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future Environment Services
ERD 30	Development plans for council’s Cemeteries & Crematoria

Milestone: To develop plans for the future provision of the Council’s Cemeteries and Crematoria	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Developing a plan for replacing the current crematorium with an improved new facility, in a new location, to meet future regulations and service demands. As well as providing a facility which can be adapted for additional offers to produce a financially sustainable business.		It was reported in Q1 that a project is underway to secure a suitable site and begin a feasibility study to define project parameters. It was also reported that an outline project programme will begin to be developed in Q2. Work on this, as well as securing a suitable site, is progressing in conjunction with colleagues in Legal and Property Services.
Identify a future cemetery site for Runcorn. The existing Runcorn Cemetery extension has capacity for possibly up to 10 further years and, as such, a new suitable cemetery site is required.		This work is in progress and on-going.

Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future Environment Services
ERD 31	Safety within Cemeteries & Crematoria

Milestone: Carry out planned equipment and safety inspections at playgrounds and Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) in the Council's parks and public open spaces.	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
<p>Memorials affected by adjacent burial excavations to be inspected and actions recorded on burial forms/cemeteries database system.</p> <p>Progress integration of ALLOY asset management system to record memorial safety testing (5 year rolling programme to fully survey).</p>		<p>ALLOY integration is being established with a joint HBC/ALLOY Project Team established and initial project team meeting held.</p> <p>Ahead of full ALLOY implementation, inspections around new burials will continue to be carried out to ensure safety to staff and public.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future Environment Services
ERD 32	Increase standards of service within Cemeteries & Crematoria

Milestone: Ensure high standard of service is maintained throughout the cemeteries; ensuring good upkeep.	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
<p>The general quality of cemetery grounds will be assessed and scored for quality, for grass cutting, weed control and overall management using the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Land Audit Management System (LAMS) system scoring.</p>		<p>Staff training completed and LAMS system now in use. Reporting this quarter identified Zone 2 areas at a good standard.</p>

4.0 Financial Statements

ECONOMY ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

Revenue Operational Budget at 30 September 24

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

Comments on the above figures

Finance communicates with the department on a regular basis to manage and analyse spending, identifying potential savings that could support current and future priorities. In an era of constrained budgets, achieving these goals is essential. The above report indicates that the department net spend will be under budget by £0.030m at year-end, compared to the month 4 projection of £0.025m under budget.

Supporting Information

The department consists of 139fte, of which 69fte are externally funded, with a staff turnover savings target of £0.126m. The employee figures in this report incorporate the projected pay award for 24/25.

Through diligent account monitoring and the success of utilising grant and external funding to alleviate pressure on the core budget is evident in employee expenses. Specific projects have been identified, and staff time has been allocated accordingly. Always ensuring that the Council is compliant with the grant conditions. This approach will continue throughout the year.

To fulfil statutory and contractual obligations and support the borough's regeneration, maintaining a complete staff establishment is essential. However, the challenge of filling surveyor and project manager roles, even with a market supplement, has resulted in a lack of suitable candidates. Consequently, the engagement of agency personnel has been necessary, anticipated to cost £0.320m this financial year. Without these personnel, the borough's regeneration efforts would be hindered, potentially leading to a loss of business rates and council tax. Where possible, these costs are reimbursed through capital and external funding grants.

The recruitment of agency staff has increased commercial rental income by enabling the completion of pending rent reviews. All units at The Hive are now tenanted, although a rent-free period was provided to secure lease completions, resulting in a £0.019m shortfall.

A reconciliation of service charges at Rutland House and the relocation of Connect to Halton to the Municipal Building have increased the fees and charges income. As a result, the department is forecasting an overachievement against the income target of £0.063m by year-end. Managers have asked to identify and implement measures to reduce unnecessary spending, whilst also ensuring the needs of the service are met leading to the department's projecting a positive variance amounting to £0.017m within supplies and services.

A recent exercise was conducted to determine the costs associated with empty properties within the Borough. Consequently, a new cost centre was established to monitor these expenses. In addition to the loss of rental income whilst the properties remain vacant, the Council also incurs costs for utilities, repairs, and maintenance. As of the end of September, the total cost related to these properties amounts to £0.182m. To reduce the expense, action needs to be taken to accelerate the leasing or explore temporary uses for properties, such as short-term rentals or community projects, which will generate some income and reduce costs.

The Department highlighted the necessity of expert advice to advance regeneration projects. Additionally, the change in Government highlighted the need for an up-to-date Housing Strategy for the Borough. Following a meeting with the Director of Economy, Enterprise, and Property, it was decided to use the Department's reserves to cover these one-off costs. Seeking external advice will assist with future grant funding requests from the LCR and Government and enable the department to fulfil its obligations regarding the borough's regeneration strategy.

Although the Council has seen a significant increase in energy costs over the last few years, it is anticipated that costs this financial year will be £0.185m lower than in 2023/24, representing a decrease of over 14%. The department is forecasting that it will be £0.107m under budget by year-end. Since contract prices are fixed until March 2025, projections are based on 2023/24 usage, using the unit price quoted by the supplier. However, if usage increases as more staff return to the office, these prices may rise. Due to a delay in securing a new security contract, the current provider has been granted a one-year extension. Based on spending over the last six months, spend is projected to exceed budget by £0.055m by the end of the year.

The Repairs and Maintenance program is under continuous review to ensure it stays within budget. This financial year is particularly challenging because the 2024/25 budget did not include an inflation adjustment and was further reduced by 10%. An exercise was conducted with the service to distinguish between capital and revenue expenditures, and the budgets have been adjusted accordingly. Despite these adjustments, revenue expenditure is projected to exceed the budget by £0.098m by the end of the year.

Similar to previous years, the school cleaning service's level agreement (SLA) is not meeting its financial targets due to the employment of agency for covering absences and leave, as well as the anticipated pay award. A reassessment of the SLA charges is in progress in preparation for the forthcoming budget year. Additionally, the demand for the service is declining as more schools transition to academy status

Approved 2024/25 Savings

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

APPENDIX A

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

Capital Budget at 30 September 24

Scheme Detail	2024/25 Original Allocation £000	2024/25 Revised Allocation £000	Q1 Spend £000	Q2 Spend £000	Q3 Spend £000	Q4 Spend £000	Total Spend £000	Allocation remaining £000
Environment & Regeneration Directorate								
Economy, Enterprise & Property								
3MG	134.5	134.5	0.0	0.0			0.0	134.5
Murdishaw redevelopment	21.2	21.2	5.4	0.0			5.4	15.8
Waterloo Building	0.0	75.0	46.0	66.0			112.0	-37.0
Equality Act Improvement Works	293.2	93.2	8.7	17.6			26.3	66.9
Foundary Lane Residential Area	1,160.0	1,160.0	1.8	464.8			466.6	693.4
Property Improvements	360.2	460.5	4.3	131.1			135.4	325.1
Town Deal	11,352.9	11,552.9	174.9	261.8			436.7	11,116.2
Runcorn Station Quarter	484.7	484.7	0.0	60.5			60.5	424.2
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	178.2	178.2	0.0	0.0			0.0	178.2
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	484.7	268.7	8.6	122.9			131.5	137.2
Changing Places	24.1	24.1	2.5	0.1			2.6	21.5
Sci-tech Daresbury Project Violet	2,200.0	2,200.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	2,200.0
Port of Weston	0.0	3,960.0	0.0	1.3			1.3	3,958.7
Kingsway Leisure Centre Demolition	0.0	750.0	0.0	30.7			30.7	719.3
Total EEP	16,693.7	21,363.0	252.2	1,156.8	0.0	0.0	1,409.0	19,954.0

Comments on above figures

3MG

3MG is in its final stages for development with HBC Field being finalised this year and developments for Liberty Park and the Mound not presently forthcoming. No significant levels of expenditure this quarter.

Foundry Lane

Resolving some of the site and financial issues remains the main focus of the work of this project in the quarter resulting in minimal expenditure with a view to being back on track in the next quarter.

Murdishaw

The allocation has been brought forward to continue work to improve the amenity at Murdishaw Community Centre as part of the wider community project. Work has been completed to provide allotment space and further work is due to be undertaken to provide secure and accessible spaces, enhancing the allotment offer. It is intended to allocate and spend the remaining balance within the financial year. The improvements are part of the wider Murdishaw community regeneration scheme which has supported the delivery of the Tea Tree community café, improvements to bungalows on the estate and environmental improvements.

Sci-Tech Daresbury Project Violet

Project Violet is currently being reviewed and a full business case is in development. As a result of increased costs, the development appraisal is being reviewed and the funding requirements being reviewed. The programme anticipates a procurement exercise in the next quarter and the revised delivery programme proposes a 26 month build with construction commencing in August 2025 and completion in Q4 2026

Waterloo Building

All works complete, site now sold, retention monies left to pay in March 2025 circa £2.5k

Equality Improvement Works

All budgets will be spent by year end, £0.200m allocated to The Brindley.

Property Improvement- The budget has been adjusted to accommodate two new unforeseen projects: replacing the platform lift at Kids Planet and fully refurbishing the public lift at Halton Lea.

Changing Places

Works all complete, Grant money fully spent, some retention monies left to pay circa £5k.

Runcorn Station Quarter

The Runcorn Station Development Project will formally be passed over to the CA Rail team as a Merseytravel project from 30th September.

A final invoice is estimated to be submitted during quarter 3 2024 period for Network Rail Project Management fees.

This is estimated to be no more than £10k. Once this has been paid and claimed, the CA Investment Team will formally end Halton's GFA. Halton's role will continue as strategic partner and actively be involved in the design process.

Town Deal

Although at different stages work is progressing with all Town Deal funded projects. The Brindley started on site mid-August and the next phase of the Creative and Digital Skill centre started on site in September. The Health Hub design work is completed, and the next stage is to tender the work. Design work progresses on the remaining projects.

Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development

A contractor for the demolition works was appointed in March 2024, with Planning Consent gained in May 2024. Following a period of services disconnections and liaison with Halton Housing (who's adjoining building Church Mansions is connected to Churchill Hall), the demolition works commenced in mid-July 2024. The main demolition works are now completed, with practical completion anticipated in mid-Oct 2024. This will bring to a close the Council capital element of the project. The Council continues to work on developing residential proposals for the site in partnership with Halton Housing, community consultation is anticipated in Winter 2024.

Kingsway Leisure Centre Demolition

Preliminary work is underway, with a submission of an application for demolition works to the Local Planning Authority and the procurement of the demolition contractor both anticipated to commence in Autumn 2024. The demolition works are on track to commence in Spring 2025, following relocation of the Leisure Centre and period of decommissioning of the building

Port of Weston

An outline business case has been developed and finalised which demonstrates the viability of the Port of Weston as a business location with a mixture of uses including high-barn warehousing and a business park.

Within the quarter a full business case was commissioned with a view to carrying out a green book assessment to secure the funding for site purchase and development.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Work has commenced at The Brindley. The allocation for the education room will be reflected in the forecast. The allocations for the High Street solar panels and Church Street works are projected for the end of the financial year.

Planning, Provision and Transportation Department

Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2024

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

Comments on the above figures

Financial Position

The current position for the PPT department is £0.231m under budget with a projected full financial year outturn of £0.102m under the approved budget.

Supporting Information

As in previous years budget holders are working closing with the Finance Officers to ensure a balanced budget is achieved. Wherever possible, capital expenditure is being prioritised in order to relieve pressure on the revenue budgets.

Employee expenditure is predicted to be under budget at the end of the financial year due to the following:

- There is now a more accurate projection of current vacant posts and when they are likely to be filled, this includes vacancies that have not been filled after going out to advert
- There is expected to be a small saving on staffing costs due to Logistics reducing the number of casual drivers and moving to contracted staff instead.
- There are 3 members of agency staff which are now shown separately from employee costs. 2 of these are covering for existing posts which are vacant, the remainder is an additional post

Efficiency savings for PPT are not expected to be met and more information is provided about this further down the report.

Supplies and services and contracted services are projected to be over budget as in previous years due to the following:

- Halton has a contract with MEAS (Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service) which is hosted by Sefton LA. This is used to provide Halton with advice in relation to ecology, waste, environmental impact assessments and local plans. Although the expenditure on the contract is over the allocated budget, it would cost Halton considerably more to provide this advice in house.
- Legal fees are projected to be over budget due to external legal advice being required in the Planning section.
- £0.109m of the overspend against supplies and services is in relation to software licences and maintenance of systems required but there is no budget available.

For a number of years has held a contingent liability on the balance sheet relating to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, whereby participants in planning appeals can apply for costs against other parties. The Council has recently had one application awarded against them, a prudent figure of £0.5m has been included within the current year accounts to cover the liability. No actual costs have yet been awarded but it is necessary to provide for the estimated cost at this stage. This is in relation to the Pavilions public enquiry; such an award highlights the need for robust planning decisions otherwise expenditure relating to costs and appeals can be a significant unplanned cost to the Council.

Street lighting expenditure is projected to come in slightly under budget. Various actions have been taken to decrease the amount of power being used such as lights being turned off 12am – 6am on some routes and over 80% of HBC owned street lighting stock of around 20,500 columns have been upgraded to LED. This is a volatile budget and could change as we draw into the dark and wintry months.

For the purpose of this report the projected figure is based on the previous financial years outturn in terms of energy costs. This is the simplest way to project expenditure due to actual usage fluctuations year upon year which cannot be predicted. There has also been a reduction in the street lighting budget which has been taken into account.

Highways maintenance budgets are projected to be under budget. Capital is again being utilised where appropriate. The report is again broken down into routine and reactive schemes and programmed works so the various areas can be looked at in more detail.

Fleet transport has seen an increase in costs across fuel and parts which reflects the projected outturn and was also evidenced in the 23/24 financial year. However, there has been a concerted effort to ensure expenditure is only accrued when absolutely necessary. Every effort is being made to prolong fleet replacements, but this also has a negative impact on the cost of repairs as they then increase.

Planning income is again projected to be under achieved. Following on from the 23/24 financial year there is a downturn in the number of applications being received. Although, Government increased Planning Fees rates towards the end of last year this has offset the lack of large development agreements we've had in previous years. This forecast is based on the income that has been received so far, this financial year and what is likely to be achieved going forward.

Building Control income is now projected to achieve slightly more than its income target. This will continue to be monitored closely in year.

Fees and charges income is projected to exceed its income target based on the last few financial years. This is an ever changing area as it is fully dependent on the amount of permit applications etc that is received.

Transport income recharges will be over on its income target, but these are offset by overspends in the other departments as mentioned in the above fleet transport costs.

Approved 2024/25 Savings

Savings that were put forward for 2024/25 can be seen in Appendix A at the end of this report

Risks/Opportunities

Across the whole department inflation has significantly driven costs up and every division is bearing the cost of this. Budgets have also been top sliced in order to help balance the overall council budgets. The Highways / Traffic and Logistics divisions are seeing the largest impact of this when purchasing materials / fuel / parts for vehicles etc.

Scheme Detail	2024/25 Original Allocation £000	2024/25 Revised Allocation £000	Q1 Spend £000	Q2 Spend £000	Q3 Spend £000	Q4 Spend £000	Total Spend £000	Allocation remaining £000
Environment & Regeneration Directorate								
Policy, Planning & Transportation Dept								
Bridge and Highway Maintenance	0.0	2,265.6	281	313			593.8	1,671.8
Runcorn Busway	0.0	0.0	227	80			307.4	-307.4
ATF3 Murdishaw to Whitehouse	0.0	3,000.0	175	363			538.3	2,461.7
ATF4 Widnes Town Centre Accessibility	0.0	114.5	0	0			0.0	114.5
A56 Reconstruction (Delph Lane)	0.0	943.7	351	0			351.1	592.6
Dukesfield ATL (Waterloo Bridge)	0.0	0.0	1	0			1.1	-1.1
LCWIP Phase 2 Daresbury	0.0	3,861.7	629	56			685.3	3,176.4
Additional Pothole Funding	0.0	429.1	0	0			0.0	429.1
CRSTS	5,288.6	5,288.6	1,656	884			2,540.0	2,748.6
Street Lighting - Structural Maintenance	1,025.6	1,025.6	0	37			37.0	988.6
Street Lighting - Upgrades	969.4	969.4	0	0			0.0	969.4
East Runcorn Connectivity	5,851.7	5,851.7	453	207			659.5	5,192.1
Risk Management	597.8	597.8	5	0			4.9	592.9
Fleet Replacements	4,927.4	4,927.4	1,082	455			1,536.8	3,390.6
Total PPT	18,660.4	29,275.0	4,860.2	2,395.0	0.0	0.0	7,255.2	22,019.8

Comments on the above capital figures

Talks are still ongoing with the Liverpool City Region for funding to offset the expenditure against Runcorn Busway and Dukesfield ATL (Waterloo Bridge). Both of these were grant funded and the full amount has been utilised, LCR are looking at funding the gap.


CRSTS (City Region Sustainable Travel Settlement) replaced the historical grant funding from the DfT. It is broken down into various areas such as carriageway maintenance, footway maintenance, street lighting and structures. Halton has recently been informed by the Combined Authority (CA) that the underspend from 23/24 will be carried forward into 24/25.

The East Runcorn Connectivity (ERC) scheme is on track and additional funding from LCR has been secured. The grant funding agreement has now been signed off by both parties and claims are currently being completed.

The A56 project is in support of the new junction completion for the Redrow development which overlaps with the ERC scheme mentioned above. Progress is not being made on this and will continue over the summer period.

LCWIP Phase 2 (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) Runcorn to Daresbury is currently underway on Long Benton Way. A change request has been submitted to LCR as expenditure is not projected to reach the original budget of £5.7m, but a response hasn't yet been received.

**POLICY, PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
APPENDIX A**

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

COMMUNITY AND GREENSPACES DEPARTMENT

Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2024

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

Comments on the above figures

The net Departmental Expenditure is estimated to be £0.395m under the approved budget at the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

The largest contributor to the underspend is in relation to spend on Employees, this is currently forecast to be £1.024m under the approved budget profile by the end of the financial year. There are several restructures taking place across the Department, in order to facilitate these, a number of vacancies arising are being held vacant for the current financial year until the new structure is implemented, the most notable being the new structure being realised when the Halton Leisure Centre is opened.

Agency spend is currently sitting at £0.258m for the first half of the 2024/25 financial year. As the Department offers a number of front-line services, including waste collections, in order to continue operations in the event of staff sickness, there is a reliance on agency to reduce the impact on residents within the borough.

Spend on premises costs is forecast to be £0.060m over budget in 2024/25, the new leisure centre is now expected to hand over within this financial year and will begin to incur costs within 24/25. The original plans were for the leisure centre to utilise the solar farm however the extension required to provide energy to the leisure centre has only recently been submitted for planning, so there is a potential budget pressure next year as the energy will have to be supplied from elsewhere until the solar farm extension is functioning.

Supplies and services are forecast to show an overspend against budget of £0.090m, primarily caused by inflationary cost increases of key goods and services over recent years, if the Council were to contain these costs within the budget profile there would be a reduction in the service provided.

School Meals food costs have been severely impacted by the high rate of inflation on food, due to the winding up of the service, the department is likely to see an underspend in regard to its expenditure, however this will be net against a reduction in income.

Waste Disposal Contract costs are forecasted to be £0.255m under the approved budget during 2024/25. Costs are likely to increase slightly from 2023/24, although as invoices are not received until later in the financial year it is difficult to fully indicate what the outturn position will be at this stage. It is also complicated due to reconciliation adjustments for prior year costs being received several months into subsequent financial years. There is scope to further drive down these costs with an increased push to recycle more, when sorted at source the processing costs are reduced.

Income across the Department is expected to be below the approved budget profile within 2024/25 by £0.141m, these are offset against reductions in forecasted expenditure for the year in particular the staffing costs, as the staff are not in place to generate the income, however the full impact of changes of this nature will be realised following the cessation of the School Meals service as this budget pressure absorbs any underspend generated. In comparison to month 4, there is increased confidence in achieving several income targets, thereby reducing the shortfall across the department.




Budget Savings**COMMUNITY AND GREENSPACES DEPARTMENT**

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
COMM3	Sport & Recreation	471	Restructuring the roles and responsibilities of the Sports Development Team	36	0		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restructure is currently underway
COMM5	Stadium & Catering Services – School Meals	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over £200,000 for a number of years and is forecast to make a similar loss by year-end. Work would be undertaken with schools over the next two years to support them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.	0	12		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The cessation of the service is underway with the majority of schools ending their contracts by the end of the calendar year.
Total Community & Environment Department				36	12		





5.0 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 unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken.</u></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 	Indicates that the measure cannot be compared to the same period last year.

