

# Employment, Learning, Skills and Community PPB – Priority Based Monitoring Report Q3

Reporting Period: 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> December

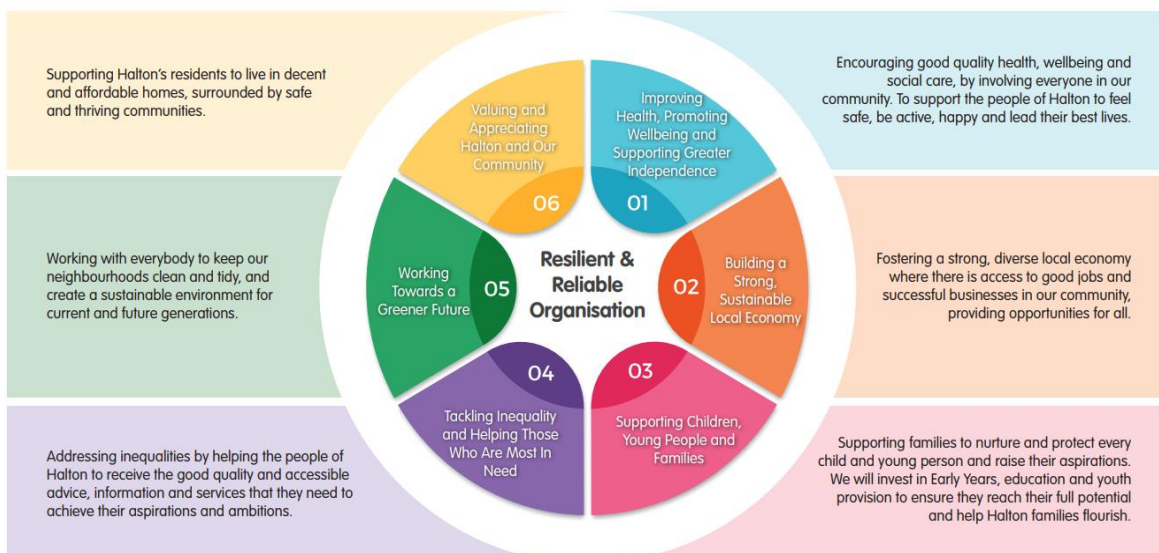
## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress against key service objectives/milestones and performance targets, during the third quarter of 2024 / 25 for service areas within the remit of the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community (ELSC) 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 Employment, Learning, Skills and Community (ELSC) Policy & Performance Board i.e.
- Employment, Learning and Skills
  - Library and Culture and Leisure Services
- 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.

### Employment, Learning & Skills

#### Key Objectives / milestones


<b>Corporate Priority</b>	Priority Two – Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy. Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Four – Tackling Inequality and Helping those who are most in need. <b>Employment, Learning &amp; Skills</b>
<b>ERD 9</b>	<b>To promote access to learning to those who need it most and create employment opportunities for Halton residents</b>

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Deliver six accredited ESOL and two Pre-ESOL courses across Widnes and Runcorn to help our BAME residents improve their English skills between 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2024 and 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2025		Delivery of 3 accredited ESOL programmes and one pre-ESOL programme began in September 2024. A further ESOL tutor has been recruited and will commence the other 3 accredited and one pre-ESOL programme in January 2025.
Utilise a budget of £11,300 LCR Devolved ESFA Hardship Funding for adult learners between 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2024 and 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2025		On track for full spend this academic year
Commence learning programme for those aged 19+ by 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2024		Commenced. Successful recruitment of Art, Personal Development and ESOL tutors has resulted in a wider curriculum offer. At R04

		(November return), Adult Learning was delivering at 95% of its expected allocation, with new programmes to launch in January 2025.
Commence year 3 of the Supported Internship Programme by August 2024		8 new Supported Interns commenced programme in Sep 2024 (year 3). All 8 remain on programme at the end of Q3.
Learners passing courses = 92% by July 2025		105 residents were supported into work through HPIJ employment programmes in Q3. There were more job starts; however, we are awaiting evidence from employers for audit.
Number of learners successfully placed into Employment = 330 by July 2025		Enrolments increased in 3/5 target ward areas (Halton View and Grange decreased slightly). Full scrutiny of ward data to take place in Autumn 1 Quality, Income and Marketing meeting in January 2025
Percentage of people engaged in Learning from most deprived areas increased from 29% to 48% by July 2025		Review of Autumn 1 Achievement Data – Overall 98%, Tailored Learning 100%, Accredited 90.5%. Further achievements expected, awaiting exam results




### Library & Culture Services

<b>Corporate Priority</b>	<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><b>Leisure Services</b></p>
<b>ERD 23</b>	<b>To provide a new leisure centre for Widnes</b>

<b>Milestone: One new leisure centre open</b>	<b>Progress Q3</b>	<b>Supporting Commentary</b>
Opening February 2025		Handover of the keys to the Council is scheduled for the 6 <sup>th</sup> of January. Wates staff (constructor) will remain on site for the first 6 weeks, continuing to complete and log items on the snagging list. Wates will provide help and




		support to Sports Facility Team, IT, Property Services, and suppliers to prepare the building and staff for opening to the public. The centre looks fantastic, welcoming and bright. The Sports Team is confident that they will be ready to deliver a varied programme of activity to support residents, staff and visitors from 10 <sup>th</sup> February.
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<b>Corporate Priority</b>	Priority One - Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority Two – Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy. Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Four – Tackling Inequality and Helping those who are most in need. <b>Leisure Services</b>
<b>ERD 24</b>	<b>Increase footfall at the Brindley</b>

<b>Milestone: Increase footfall at the Brindley</b>	<b>Progress Q3</b>	<b>Supporting Commentary</b>
Brindley - Total number of tickets sold.		26,805 = £491,099, this figure is an increase of 14,657 tickets from quarter 2. Quarter 3 includes the pantomime.
Brindley - Total number of days Hired days.		42 Hire Days, this figure is lower than last quarter by 11 hires. This is in part because we have halted bookings due to the current construction works and the requirement to give the contractor spaces within the calendar to undertake noisy groundworks.
Brindley - Total number of Council Promotions		52 Council Promotion Days, this figure is up has increased by 41 from quarter 2.




<b>Corporate Priority</b>	Priority One - Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority Two – Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy. Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Four – Tackling Inequality and Helping those who are most in need. <b>Leisure Services</b>
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<b>ERD 25</b>	<b>Increase footfall at the Libraries</b>
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Milestone: Increase footfall at the Libraries	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Footfall for all libraries:  Ditton Library Widnes Library Runcorn Library Halton Lea Library		Site footfall counters: Ditton Library = 14,490 Halton Lea Library = 35,657 Runcorn Library = 22,916 Widnes Library = 23,794 <b>Total = 96,857</b>  Previous quarter (2) people count total was 125,772 Figures for the same quarter last year 2023: (D)4461 (R)17493 (H)32352 (W)19530 = 73,836 an improvement on last year of over 20,000.
Library Digital issues		<b>Digital Issues Grand Total = 1,030,223</b> The previous quarter was 1,010,252 (increase of over 20,000)
Library Issues in branch:  Ditton Library Widnes Library Runcorn Library Halton Lea Library		<b>Library Issues in Branch (October – December 2024)</b> Ditton = 3,894 Widnes = 20,487 Runcorn = 6,639 Halton Lea = 18,801  Library issues are up on same period in 2023 but down on previous quarter 2024 (July – September 2024) as expected with summer reading initiatives and events.

<b>Corporate Priority</b>	Priority One - Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority Two – Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy. Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Four – Tackling Inequality and Helping those who are most in need.  <b>Community Centres</b>
<b>ERD 26</b>	<b>Increase footfall at the Community Centres</b>

Milestone: Monitor footfall, hires and events at Community Centres	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
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Community Centres - Total number of users in attendance (including drop-ins, events and hires)		<p>The total number of users for Q3 is 52,788</p> <p>Castlefields 9,427  Ditton 11,241  Grangeway 13,605  Murdishaw 7,661  Upton 10,854</p> <p>The total number of users is slightly higher than the previous quarter, the events have brought in more customers along with the increased bookings all 5 our Centres.</p>
Community Centres - Total number of hires		<p>The total number of hires for Q2 is 2,258</p> <p>Castlefields 427  Ditton 473  Grangeway 499  Murdishaw 369  Upton 490</p> <p>All Community Centres are performing well with increased bookings at all Centres. We have taken extra booking due to the closure of the Chi Cafe and accommodated them in Castlefields Community Centre.</p>
Community Centres - Total number of Centre organised events		<p>4/5 Community Centres held parties for Halloween, and Christmas for children. Adult Christmas parties were also held in 4/5.</p> <p>Grangeway and Upton Community Centres run weekly Bingo sessions which are well attended. Grangeway also held a Christmas Fayre with stall holders and activities for Children. Castlefields has an Animal Teach event at the end of the year.</p> <p>Overall, the Community Centre service directly delivered 41 events in Q3 which is on par with the previous quarter, and an increase on the previous year.</p>

## 4.0 Financial Statements

### ECONOMY ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

#### Revenue Operational Budget at 30 November 24

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	5,075	3,558	3,285	273	410
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	198	(198)	(320)
Repairs & Maintenance	1,706	1,280	1,346	(66)	(99)
Premises	136	119	119	0	0
Energy & Water Costs	1,248	666	617	49	74
NNDR	690	691	660	31	31
Rents	173	94	89	5	7
Economic Regeneration Activities	21	0	0	0	0
Security	544	243	278	(35)	(53)
Supplies & Services	506	387	369	18	27
Supplies & Services - Grant	2,090	302	304	(2)	(3)
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	75	85	86	(1)	(1)
Capital Finance	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	185	186	185	1	1
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>12,449</b>	<b>7,611</b>	<b>7,536</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges Income	-987	-405	-460	55	83
Rent - Commercial Properties	-872	-524	-511	(13)	(20)
Rent - Investment Properties	-38	-26	-26	0	0
Government Grant	-2,510	-1,157	-1,158	1	1
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-193	-403	-400	(3)	(5)
Schools SLA Income	-227	-208	-198	(10)	(15)
Recharges to Capital	-295	-214	-217	3	5
Transfer from Reserves	-1,120	-1,164	-1,164	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-6,242</b>	<b>-4,101</b>	<b>-4,134</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>6,207</b>	<b>3,510</b>	<b>3,402</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	2,074	1,382	1,382	0	0
Transport Support	30	18	18	0	0
Central Support	1,947	1,298	1,298	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-7,927	-5,285	-5,285	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-3,872</b>	<b>-2,587</b>	<b>-2,587</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>2,335</b>	<b>923</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>123</b>

#### 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 the department will be under budget by £0.123m at year-end, compared to the period 6 projection of £0.030m 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 pay award for 24/25. All vacancies have been removed from the budget until the next financial year.

Through diligent account monitoring, 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. Ensuring at all times that we are compliance 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 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. So far, £0.050m has been recharged.

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 £0.020m 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 of £0.083m 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 £0.027m 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 incur additional costs for utilities, repairs, and maintenance. As of the end of September, the total costs related to these properties amount to £0.203m. To reduce the expenses actions need 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 there has been a significant increase in energy costs over the last few years, it is anticipated that costs this financial year will be £0.152m lower than in 2023/24, representing a decrease of over 11%. The department is forecasting that it will be £0.074m under budget by year-end. Since contract prices are fixed until March 2025, projections are based on the 2023/24 usage, using the unit price quoted by the supplier.

Due to a delay in securing a new security contract, the current provider has been granted a one-year extension. Based on the spending over the last six months, actual spend is projected to exceed budget by £0.053m by the end of the year.



The repairs and maintenance programme is under continuous review to ensure it stays within budget. This financial year is particularly challenging because the 24/25 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 £0.099m by the end of the year.

### **Approved 2024/25 Savings**

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

## **ECONOMY, ENTERPRISE AND PROPERTY DEPARTMENT**

### **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		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		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.
<b>Total Economy, Enterprise &amp; Property Department</b>				<b>152</b>	<b>0</b>		

### Capital Budget at 30 November 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
<b>Environment &amp; Regeneration Directorate</b>								
<b>Economy, Enterprise &amp; Property</b>								
3MG	134.5	134.5	0.0	0.0	0.0		0.0	134.5
Murdishaw redevelopment	21.2	21.2	5.4	0.0	0.0		5.4	15.8
Waterloo Building	0.0	75.0	46.0	66.0	-112.0		0.0	75.0
Equality Act Improvement Works	293.2	93.2	8.7	17.6	59.6		85.9	7.3
Foundary Lane Residential Area	1,160.0	1,160.0	1.8	464.8	2.3		468.9	691.1
Property Improvements	360.2	460.5	4.3	131.1	286.6		422.0	38.5
Town Deal	11,352.9	11,552.9	174.9	261.8	940.0		1,376.7	10,176.2
Runcorn Station Quarter	484.7	484.7	0.0	60.5	15.5		76.0	408.7
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	178.2	178.2	0.0	0.0	12.2		12.2	166.0
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	484.7	268.7	8.6	122.9	61.5		193.0	75.7
Changing Places	24.1	24.1	2.5	0.1	1.6		4.2	19.9
Sci-tech Daresbury Project Violet	2,200.0	2,200.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		0.0	2,200.0
Port of Weston	0.0	3,960.0	0.0	1.3	1.7		3.0	3,957.0
Kingsway Leisure Centre Demolition	0.0	750.0	0.0	30.7	0.0		30.7	719.3
<b>Total EEP</b>	<b>16,693.7</b>	<b>21,363.0</b>	<b>252.2</b>	<b>1,156.8</b>	<b>1,269.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>2,678.0</b>	<b>18,685.0</b>

### Comments on above figures

**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 budget 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 (whose 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** A 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 starting to be 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.

## COMMUNITY AND GREENSPACES DEPARTMENT

### Revenue Budget as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2024

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	17,435	11,470	10,795	675	1,012
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	149	(149)	(224)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	164	(164)	(246)
Premises	3,455	2,004	2,092	(88)	(90)
Supplies & Services	2,186	1,304	1,381	(77)	(115)
Hired & Contracted Services	623	623	623	0	0
Book Fund	128	96	96	0	0
Food Provisions	388	281	259	22	33
School Meals Food	1,960	972	1,025	(53)	(80)
Transport	117	52	74	(22)	(33)
Other Agency Costs	429	340	340	0	0
Other Expenditure	0	0	63	(63)	(64)
Waste Disposal Contracts	7,002	3,317	3,131	186	279
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	64	44	27	17	26
Grants to Norton Priory	172	172	172	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>33,959</b>	<b>20,675</b>	<b>20,391</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>498</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Sales Income	-1,373	-991	-973	(18)	(26)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,490	-4,016	-4,122	106	158
Rental Income	-235	-135	-170	35	53
Markets Income	-910	-446	-437	(9)	(12)
Government Grant Income	-1,337	-1,337	-1,337	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-703	-361	-361	0	0
School SLA Income	-1,313	-564	-564	0	0
School Meals Income	-3,598	-1,942	-1,808	(134)	(200)
Internal Fees Income	-322	-135	-177	42	64
Capital Salaries	-173	-90	-34	(56)	(84)
Transfers From Reserves	-15	-15	-15	0	202
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-15,469</b>	<b>-10,032</b>	<b>-9,998</b>	<b>(34)</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>18,490</b>	<b>10,643</b>	<b>10,393</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>653</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	1,675	1,115	1,116	(1)	0
Transport	2,257	1,491	1,515	(24)	(37)
Central Support	3,897	2,581	2,581	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-1,148	-765	-765	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>6,880</b>	<b>4,422</b>	<b>4,447</b>	<b>(25)</b>	<b>(37)</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>25,370</b>	<b>15,065</b>	<b>14,840</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>616</b>

### Comments on the above figures

The net departmental expenditure is forecast to be £0.616m under budget at the end of the 2024/25 financial year. A marginally improved position from the expected £0.395m forecasted in Month 6. The largest contributor to the underspend is in relation to spend on Employees, this is currently forecast to be £1.012m 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 £0.313m 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 £0.090m 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 2024/25. The site is planning to be open in February 2025, in order to facilitate this, both sites will incur costs in the overlap. This should be offset by the increase in fees expected from a rise in demand with the new site. 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 is forecasting an overspend of £0.115m which is a budget pressure throughout the Department, and is 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. As the Department provides very visible services to the residents of Halton, any changes would be likely to have a negative impact to The Council's reputation.

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 achieve £0.279m under the approved budget during 2024/25. Costs are likely to increase slightly from 2023/24 however, from a budgetary position it is still expected to be underspent by the end of the financial year. Reconciliation adjustments for prior year costs are also received several months into subsequent financial years which cause difficulties when accurately projecting expenditure. There is central government initiative to incorporate food waste recycling into all waste provisions across the country, once this has been fully implemented, there is scope to further drive down these costs as when sorted at source, the processing costs are reduced.

Income across the Department (excluding reserves movements) is expected to be below the approved budget profile within 2024/25 by £0.047m, an improved figure from Month 6 - £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. The improvement from Month 6 has come from the Leisure Centre site opening in February and generating higher income than that of the Kingsway facility.

The most significant change in reported outturn from Month 6 is within the Transfers from Reserves line. There has been an identification of £0.202m of grant funding which can be utilised in year from the Homes for Ukraine scheme which is currently in reserves. This can be used against costs arising from the support and subsequent impact on other services as Halton hosts Ukrainian citizens.

### 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		Phase 1 of the restructure is underway with subsequent phases to occur within the next financial year.
COMM5	Stadium & Catering Services – School Meals	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over £200,000 for a number of years and is forecast to make a similar loss by year-end. Work would be undertaken with schools over the next two years to support them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.	0	12		The cessation of the service is underway with the majority of schools ending their contracts by the end of the calendar year.
<b>Total Community &amp; Environment Department</b>				<b>36</b>	<b>12</b>		




## 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</u> unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken.</i>

### Direction of Travel Indicator

Green 	Indicates that performance <b>is better</b> as compared to the same period last year.
Amber 	Indicates that performance <b>is the same</b> as compared to the same period last year.
Red 	Indicates that performance <b>is worse</b> 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.