

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

SAFER POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

**Councillor
Norman
Plumpton
Walsh
Chair**

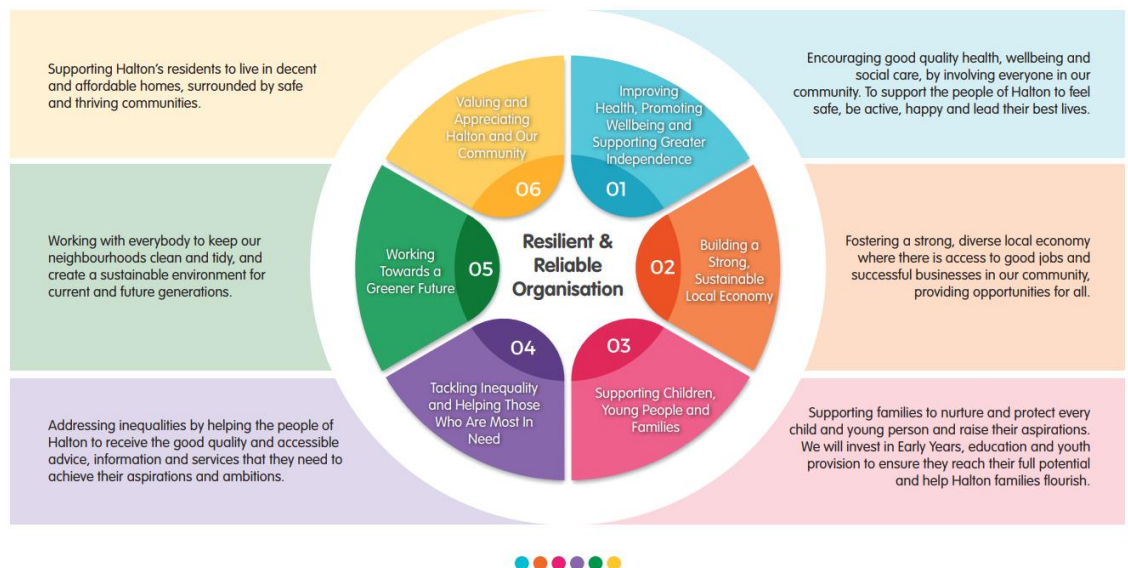
Creating a 'Safer Halton' remains a key priority for the Council and its partners and empowers confidence in our residents and visitors that they are supported and protected from harm.

The work of the Board responds directly to priorities five and six as detailed in the Council's corporate plan whilst underpinning across the Council's suite of priorities:



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

Plan on a Page



The Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board is focussed on meeting the needs of our communities to help keep them safe and seeks to explore and anticipate emerging issues, working closely with partners organisations across Halton.

I and the other Elected Members are satisfied that we have considered, responded to, and reported on the main issues affecting Halton but also looked at any potential new areas that may not have previously been scrutinised.

I thank my colleagues who sit on the Board for their contributions to the work of the PPB and to those officers and guests who presented to the Board. We have been extremely fortunate to have excellent support and reporting from our Officers.

Finally, I want to make clear that Halton continues to be a safe place to live, visit and work due to the combined efforts of the Council and its many partners, and that commitment will remain in the year ahead.

	Councillor Norman Plumpton-Walsh Chairman, Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board.
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MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board comprised of twelve Councillors: -

Councillor Norman Plumpton-Walsh (Chair)

Councillor Chris Carlin (Vice Chair)

Councillor Sandra Baker

Councillor Laura Bevan

Councillor Irene Bramwell

Councillor Louise Goodall

Councillor Valerie Hill

Councillor Alan Lowe

Cllr Angela McInerney

Councillor Margaret Ratcliffe

Councillor Aimee Skinner

Councillor Pamela Wallace

The Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Community Safety, Channel and Prevent activities, Domestic Abuse, Safeguarding Adults, Environmental Health, issues related to Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, and the Safer Halton Partnership. The Board is also represented on the Safer Halton Partnership and Cheshire Police & Crime Panel. The primary function is to focus on the work of the Council (and its partners) in seeking to ensure that the environment within the Borough is safe for local people to enjoy, and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan in relation to the Safer Halton Priority.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The Board met 4 times during the Municipal Year 2024/25:

- 11 June 2024
- 10 September 2024
- 19 November 2024
- 4 February 2025

Some of the main activities and issues that have come before the Board during the year are set out below.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Serious Violence Duty

The serious violence duty became a statutory duty as of 31st January 2023. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 had been amended to include the priority for Community Safety Partnerships and placed a duty on a range of organisations to work together to have a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence.

The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) Office co-ordinated this work across Cheshire and developed a strategic needs assessment and strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence.

Additional funding to support this area of work was also managed through the PCC Office who had commissioned services in responding to this area of work.

A summary of the serious violence delivery plan was shared demonstrating the significant work undertaken to understand the issues across Cheshire.

Working groups across the Cheshire Lead Officers were established to identify and analyse the strategic needs assessment and priorities. A five-year strategy and a "plan on a page" for 24-25 had also been developed with annual delivery plans agreed to set out delivery plans responding to the priorities.

Prevent

Prevent is the governments framework to prevent radicalisation. The objectives of Prevent are to tackle the ideological causes of terrorism, intervene early to support people susceptible to radicalisation and enable people who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate. The governance and approach to Prevent includes a local authority level Channel multi-agency partnership which considers Prevent referrals and appropriate interventions. Halton is also represented at operational and strategic County level Contest meetings which is the governments national framework/governance for Prevent. A Halton based multi-agency Prevent delivery group has also been established to support proactive, preventative multiagency approaches to tackling radicalisation to extreme ideologies. This provides an effective mechanism of engagement working to ensure consistent approaches to Prevent across Halton's system. Referral and training have been strengthened with partners in the Home Office, Department of Education and Counter Terrorism Policing supporting this work.

The expectations of the Council are to complete an annual benchmarking process with the Home Office, complete an annual prevent risk assessment and develop an action plan. The Council receives no funding in relation to the Prevent duty. The council has Prevent leads and point of contacts, a delivery group that meets quarterly and a fully established Channel process. A Council Prevent intranet page has been provided and Council staff are encouraged to complete the Home Office Prevent awareness course.

A Liverpool city region approach to Prevent had commenced sharing resources were possible as Liverpool benefits from being a Home Office funded area. A training offer was developed and

there was a regional approach to prevent week in October. As part of this approach a Members seminar was delivered in November.

Cheshire Police Performance and Local Policing Unit updates for Runcorn and Widnes

Cheshire Police priorities include violence and intimidation against women and girls, incident management and response times and victims code of practice.

The forces performance data demonstrates Cheshire was the second-best Police force in the country for charged / summonsed outcome rates for sexual offences and the third best for charges / summonsed outcome rates for violence against the person.

Police and Crime Commissioner

A refresh on the Police and Crime Commissioner plan for Cheshire to 2028. The Commissioner's office had consulted widely on the development of the new plan and the three core principles identified were: Listen to the public – to ensure locally informed policing priorities and support victims. Modernise using technology and innovation and consider the police estate to be fit for the future and reduce crime – provide an accessible and responsive policy service with prevention and intervention culture firmly embedded with a focus on supporting rehabilitation.

The PCC had dialogue with the Board regarding parking enforcement issues experienced in Halton and advised 'hot spot policing' would be progressed to provide an opportunity to fund additional police resources to tackle issues that would benefit from additional police resource.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Enforcement Team Overview including Anti-Social Behaviour Case Review update.

The Enforcement team covers anti-social behaviour, environmental crime, waste and CCTV.

Anti-Social Behaviour responds to referrals from partner agencies by providing support to those experiencing anti-social behaviour, including co-ordinating action plans, support with pursuing offenders and diverting from negative behaviours using restorative practice and early intervention.

Environmental Crime & Waste Enforcement update

From 1st October 24 – 31st March 24 the enforcement team had been involved with investigating 160 incidents of waste related offences ranging from a single refuse sack in an entry to fly tipping of large amounts of building waste, green waste etc dog fouling complaints, littering complaints, storage and management of commercial waste generated from business premises, incorrect / nuisance storage of waste receptacles, waste being stored on private land and other forms of environmental crime. 116 actions were able to be taken including the issuing of 15 fixed penalty notices, 12 statutory notices issued, 89 advisory and warning letters issued and 9 cases were pending prosecution hearings at a Magistrates Court.

A Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in relation to dog control was implemented on 18th March 2024. The aim was to reduce problems caused by irresponsible dog ownership in public places. This makes it an offence to have a dog off a lead in specified areas (dog exclusion zones).

CCTV and Control Room update

The CCTV Operators monitor 148 cameras across the borough, working with partner agencies such as the police, pub watch and Mersey Gateway to respond to incidents and maintain public safety. This involves 24/7 Control Room operation however; this has experienced reduced capacity with staff absence and lengthy delays in recruitment.

Community Safety & Protection Division Update

The division was established in September 2023.

Domestic Abuse Services update

The Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) staffing resource has increased as recommended in Halton's Safe Lives Report. The staff establishment includes a Case Officer working with those that harm to support behaviour change and the service secured funding for a 12-month post / project an Advocate Educator who is working with health professionals in Halton's general practice surgeries.

The service supports Halton's statutory partnership the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board which is overseeing the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Safe Lives Report 2023. The board is progressing a system wide strategic approach to ensure compliance with statutory duties and responds to place needs including training and workforce development, authentic voice and communication toolkit, children and young people and multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC's). Two Members seminars provided in the Municipal year on Domestic Abuse with a total of 13 Members attending, the seminars were positively received.

Enforcement & CCTV update

The service had secured additional funding for Neighbourhood Patrol Officers for 12 months. Two Officers commenced in mid-august, service delivery and impacts will be monitored and reviewed to consider sustainability.

Partnerships are continuing to develop to tackle hotspots in the borough including the deployment of the increased mobile CCTV provision. The Serious Violence delivery plan diversionary activities are becoming embedded in Halton.

Emergency Planning update

An annual exercise with Runcorn COMAH Operators was successfully delivered. An exercise was planned for Widnes Operators for the Autumn.

The team was strengthening the Council's on call arrangements looking at the framework and training to build resilience and robustness to responses should major incidents or standbys be declared.

Asylum Seeking and Refugees update.

A multiagency forum is embedded and is thriving with membership from a wide cross section of agencies active in this area of work.

Safer Halton Partnership

The statutory board had previously set out the governance along with a draft strategy consulting on nine draft priorities – anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and violence against women and girls, serious and organised crime, integrated offender management, counter terrorism / prevent,

hate crime, substance misuse, serious violence, road safety. A delivery plan was being developed to respond to the priorities.

White Ribbon update

A motion approved at full Council in October 2023 included an action for HBC to become a White Ribbon accredited organisation. This requires the development of an action plan to complete full accreditation to White Ribbon. White Ribbon Champions were identified, a steering group established and the action plan in development for submission. White Ribbon have accepted the Council's membership whilst the process is completed. The White Ribbon approach enables the Council to proactively engage in a range of actions to tackle the causes and effects of domestic abuse and to promote support for victims and challenge the behaviour of perpetrators.

The Community Safety team had created a change programme of adults called "Choices" and received 19 referrals in September from a number of agencies such as Social Care and Probation.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Trading Standards Service update

Trading Standards provide a range of statutory services to protect consumers and legitimate businesses from unfair, misleading, or unsafe trading practices. A number of the services contribute to protecting public health and safeguarding children and adults such as scam awareness, doorstep crime, illegal money laundering, tobacco and vapes, age restricted sales, consumer advice and the Citizens Advice consumer helpline and iCAN consumer alert network.

Alcohol and substance misuse in Halton

Halton Combatting Drugs Partnership brings together key partners such as CGL, the Prison Service, Probation Service, Police, local NHS Trusts, Job Centre Plus and Council Services. The aim is to improve collaboration, information and data sharing between partners to inform effective joint working, disrupt county lines by breaking drug supply chains, protect vulnerable individuals and groups from becoming involved in or victims of drug use and drug related crime. Deliver integrated drug and alcohol treatment which offers holistic care for physical and mental health. Rebuild and transform communities, reducing drug use and preventing drug related harms.

Liverpool John Moores University had been commissioned to develop and implement a local drug information system.

The partnership was developing a Synthetic Opioid Preparedness Plan in response to the rising threat these substances within Halton.

Substance misuse was identified as a Safer Halton Strategic Priority in the 2024 – 2027 Community Safety Partnership.

Change Grow Live (CGL) provide adult substance misuse services in Widnes in Runcorn in hubs and community venues. The delivery supports an integrated approach to managing this cohort to aid recovery and improve outcomes.

The number of service users presenting for treatment has continually increased with increased capacity provided by additional OHID targeted grant which had been confirmed until 25/26.

Adults in treatment for alcohol use has continued to increase and remains the main substance of choice for those referred to CGL. Alcohol detoxification remains the most effective means of achieving outcomes for individual assessed primarily due to the physical and mental health needs of individuals being referred to the service.

At the end of November 2024 CGL Halton's success rate for treating those misusing alcohol had increased to 42% performing above both CGL and national averages for the cohort that stood at 34% and 35% respectively.

Miscellaneous

Council wide Spending as of 30 November 2024

The overall revenue and capital spending position as of 30th November 2024 was shared with the latest 24/25 outturn forecast explaining key variances from budget.

DURING 2025/26 THE BOARD PLANS TO FOCUS ON:

- Housing – the board to consider its new area of scrutiny and develop a programme of reports and performance which responds to the new responsibilities.
- Halton's approach to Domestic Abuse with key areas of focus on the Domestic Abuse Board development, meeting statutory accommodation requirements and learning from the harm reduction work mobilising in spring/summer 2025 led by the PCC's Office.
- Counter Terrorism approaches, learning from the governments Prevent review and public enquiry into Southport.
- Modern Day Slavery, understanding the pan-Cheshire arrangements, strategy and delivery.
- Tackling environmental crime.
- The Council's approach to public surveillance.
- Understand any mobilisation or impacts of additional 'hot spot policing' in Halton.
- Understanding future devolution arrangements for Warrington & Cheshire which interface with Halton's community safety duties and governance.

Contact Officer for the Board

Members of the public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact Nicola Goodwin, Director - Community and Greenspaces Department on 0151 511 8105 or via email nicola.goodwin@halton.gov.uk