

HOUSING AND SAFER POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Housing and Safer Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 10 June 2025 at the Board Room, Municipal Building, Widnes

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor L. Nolan

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Butler, N. Goodwin, A. Plant and N. Renison

Also in attendance: None

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

SAF1 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and acknowledged that the Board had a busy agenda for the next 12 months.

SAF2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2025 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

SAF3 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

SAF4 ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2024 – MARCH 2025

Members considered the 2024-25 Annual Report from the Chair of the Board, which outlined the contributions made to the ongoing work of the Board. The Board had met four times during the year and the report set out the work carried out during the Municipal Year April 2024 to March 2025.

The Chair and Deputy Chair thanked Councillor Norman Plumpton-Walsh, the outgoing Chair, for all his work and dedication to the Board.

Following discussions, some additional information was noted:

- Concerns were raised about the number of registered dangerous dogs in the Borough, many which have been seen off lead and without muzzles. The Chair confirmed that he was due to meet with the Police Crime Commissioner and would raise these concerns and feedback to the Board in due course. It was suggested that Royal Mail workers were able to help and identify addresses where the dogs live; further information about this would be provided to the Chair. Members were also advised that Neighbourhood Patrol Officers would also be able to provide some support;
- Another concern was the rising numbers of ketamine use. It was noted that this issue was discussed at length at the Children & Young People Policy and Performance Board and an event had been arranged to discuss. Members were also reassured that drugs and alcohol was a key priority for Public Health and information was being sent to schools and parents. In addition, the Safer Halton Partnership had funded a series of events to raise the awareness and dangers for schools. It was agreed that a briefing note about this would be sent to all Members.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Councillor Garner declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the following item; her partner was employed by Evolve, a subsidiary of Riverside Housing.

SAF5 PRODUCTION OF A BOROUGH WIDE HOUSING STRATEGY – PROGRESS UPDATE

The Board received a report from the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which provided a progress update on the new Housing Strategy for the Borough.

Following the approval for production of a new Housing Strategy at the Council's Executive Board in April 2024, Board members were advised that Arc4, a housing research policy specialist, had been commissioned to

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support the production process of the Strategy. This had commenced in September 2024 and consisted of two stages, the first being a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) which included a household survey of residents in Halton being undertaken.

The survey took place between November and December 2024 and was sent to 16,530 households. 1,620 useable responses were received (9.8% response rate). It covered 4 broad themes:

- Your home, neighbourhood and household;
- Housing history;
- Future housing requirements: whole household; and
- Future housing requirements: newly forming households.

The main purpose of the survey was to provide evidence to help assess housing need by type, size and tenure within different parts of the Borough.

The Housing Strategy was currently in the draft process (Stage 2) and once completed, an informal stakeholder engagement would be undertaken in June/July 2025, followed by a formal 6 week public consultation in July/August 2025; the final revisions and adoption was planned for September/October 2025.

Some concerns were raised by Members regarding housing standards and difficulties Ward Councillors had contacting the housing providers. Following discussions, the Chair agreed to contact the Chief Executive of Halton Housing regarding the matters raised and the Board agreed a focus on housing standards, as part of its responsibilities, moving forward.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) Note the progress of the new Boroughwide Housing Strategy; and
- 2) Promote participation the Stakeholder and Formal Public Consultation process.

SAF6 DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICE

The Board received a report from the Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on the following ongoing service developments in the Domestic Abuse Service:

- Domestic Abuse Strategy - this had been renewed until the end of 2026 and was appended to the report. The 4 strategic priorities remained the same and Strategy was approved by the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board in April 2025;
- Domestic Abuse Partnership Board – Halton’s needs assessment required an update and this would be completed by the end of the year. This would inform the emerging from 2026 onwards;
- White Ribbon - the steering group signed off the action plan on 7 May 2025 and submitted to White Ribbon to complete the last stage of accreditation. A copy of the action plan was appended to the report for information; and
- Harm Reduction – the Police and Crime Commissioner’s Office had secured additional resources for Halton to deliver a harm reduction initiative. This would include joint working with a number of agencies including health, housing, criminal justice agencies, drug and alcohol services and local authority departments. An evaluation report would be presented to the Board in due course.

Members acknowledged that it was pleasing to note the work being done and that action is being taken against domestic violence for all victims. Members also suggested that they would like to see a workforce policy for domestic abuse.

RESOLVED: That the Board note and comment on the report.

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SAF7 COMMUNITY SAFETY & PROTECTION DIVISION

The Board received a report from the Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on the progress in the Community Safety and Protection Division. The report highlighted some key matters for the Board to note, that would progress over the next 12 months, in the following areas:

- Enforcement and CCTV – a report would be presented to the Executive Board in July and a piece of work was planned to invest in this area of work; the Board would receive further updates throughout the year;

- Emergency Planning - the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (also known as Martyn's Law) received Royal Assent on 3 April 2025. The regulator had been confirmed as the Security Industry Authority (SIA). A Halton working group had been set up to scrutinise the guidance to ensure the Council was compliant; and
- Devolution Arrangements – arrangements were progressing in Cheshire and Warrington and the anticipated implementation of a Mayor and Combined Authority was May 2026. A piece of work was being undertaken to consider a pan-Cheshire Community Safety Partnership in a devolved administration. The Board would be updated throughout the year on arrangements and how progress would impact on Halton.

Following discussions, some additional information was noted:

- Requests for CCTV in hotspot areas would be addressed outside of the meeting;
- Issues with electric bikes should be reported to the Police; and
- Concerns were raised about inappropriate comments on social media relating to various issues such as asylum seekers and refugees and the High Court's ruling on the definition of a "woman", under the Equality Act 2010. These were acknowledged, however, Members were reminded that it was not the Council's role to respond to comments on social media.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Councillor Teeling declared a pecuniary interest in the following item; her sister worked as an agency nurse across various care homes.

Councillor Bramwell declared a pecuniary interest in the following item; her daughter was employed as a Social Worker by Halton Borough Council.

SAF8 COUNCIL WIDE SPENDING AS AT 31 JANUARY 2025

The Board received a copy of a report, which was presented to the Council's Executive Board on 13 March 2025. The report outlined the Council's overall revenue and

capital spending position as at 31 January 2025, together with the latest 2024/25 outturn forecast. The report also described the reasons for key variances from budget.

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

RESOLVED: That the Councilwide financial position as at 31 January 2025, as outlined in the report, be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.01 p.m.