

COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Council on Wednesday, 4 March 2026 in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Abbott, Ball, Baker, Begg, Bevan, Bramwell, Carlin, Connolly, Dennett, Davidson, Dourley, Fry, Gilligan, Goodall, Harris, Hughes, Jones, Leck, M. Lloyd Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, C. Loftus, K. Loftus, McDermott, A. McInerney, T. McInerney, Nelson, L. Nolan, P. Nolan, Philbin, Polhill, N. Plumpton Walsh, Ratcliffe, Ryan, Stockton, Skinner, Teeling, Thompson, Thornton, Wainwright, Wall, Wallace, Wharton, Woolfall and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Garner, S. Hill, V. Hill, Hutchinson, Logan, A. Lowe, McDonough, C. Plumpton Walsh, Rowe and Stretch

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney, G. Cook, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson and R. Rout

Also in attendance: 4 members of the public and 1 member of the press

Action

COU61 COUNCIL MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 3 December 2026, were taken as read and signed as a correct record

COU62 THE MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

At the commencement of the meeting the Mayor asked the everyone to stand for a minute's silence in honour of Councillor Valerie Hill and Mr Bryant (a former Councillor) who had both sadly passed away. On behalf of the Council, she sent her condolences to both families.

COU63 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader in his report to Council:

- noted Councillor C Loftus's announcement that he had resigned as a member of the Labour Party and was now an Independent member of the Council;
- passed on his condolences to Councillor Valerie Hill's family;

- welcomed the appointment of Andrew Donaldson who would commence his post as Chief Executive of Halton Council on 9 March 2026;
- acknowledged the work of that had taken place setting a Council budget for 2026/27, the forecast overspend in the Budget for 2025/26 had been eradicated;
- advised that a report from Cipfa had been circulated to Councillors and officers were working on the recommendations outlined in the document. This included establishing an Independent Board to review the Council's finances;
- Halton had successfully hosted a job fair on 28 January which offered a range of programmes for those aged 18 to 24 years; and
- he thanked Wesley Rourke – Director of Environment and Regeneration for his 23 years service at Halton and on behalf of the Council wished him well for his retirement.

COU64 URGENT DECISIONS

Council considered a report of the Interim Chief Executive, on the urgent decisions taken since the last meeting of the Council.

RESOLVED: That Council note the report.

COU65 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Council considered the minutes of the Executive Board meetings on 11 December 2025, 15 January 2026 and 12 February 2026.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.

COU66 MINUTES OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

The Council considered the minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting on 14 January 2026.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.

COU67 QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 8

It was noted that no questions had been submitted

under Standing Order No. 8.

COU68 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2026-27 (EXB92 REFERS)

Council considered a report of the Interim Chief Executive, on a calendar of meetings for the 2026/27 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED: That the calendar of meetings for the 2026/27 Municipal Year, as appended to the report, be approved.

COU69 BUDGET 2026-27 - KEY DECISION (EXB93 REFERS)

The Executive Board had considered a report setting out a recommendation to Council in respect of the revenue budget, capital programme and council tax for 2026/27.

The Executive Board had recommended that Council adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A of the report, which included setting the budget at £224.237m, the Council Tax requirement of £71.959m (before Parish, Police, Fire and LCR Combined Authority precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,938.81.

Councillor Dennett, Corporate Services Portfolio holder, thanked all Officers involved, for their support in producing this challenging budget and wished to record his thanks to the Members for their contribution.

In accordance with Standing Order 16 (3), a recorded vote was taken.

The following Members voted FOR the motion:

Councillors Abbott, Ball, Baker, Begg, Bevan, Bramwell, Carlin, Connolly, Dennett, Dourley, Fry, Gilligan, Goodall, Harris, Hughes, Jones, Leck, M. Lloyd Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, McDermott, A. McInerney, T. McInerney, Nelson, L. Nolan, P. Nolan, Philbin, N. Plumpton Walsh, Polhill, Ratcliffe, Ryan, Skinner, Stockton, Teeling, Thompson, Thornton, Wall, Wallace, Wharton, Woolfall, and Wright.

Councillors Davidson, C. Loftus and Wainwright voted AGAINST the motion.

Councillor K. Loftus abstained.

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1) adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A, which includes setting the budget at £224.237m, the Council Tax requirement of £71.959m (before Parish, Police, Fire and LCR Combined Authority precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,938.81;
- 2) approve the capital programme set out in Appendix D;
- 3) approve the budget savings set out in Appendix E.

COU70 2025/26 SPENDING AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2025 (EXB83 REFERS)

Council was asked to approve revisions to the Capital Programme as outlined in the attached report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Executive Directors continue to implement the approved 2025/26 savings proposals as detailed in Appendix 4;
- 2) Executive Directors continue to identify areas where they can further reduce their directorate's spending or generate income, in order to ensure the councilwide forecast outturn overspend position for the year remains within the budget;
- 3) this report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board in order to ensure they have a full appreciation of the councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility;
- 4) Council be asked to approve the revisions to the capital programme set-out in paragraph 3.31 and incorporated within Appendix 5; and
- 5) the forecast position for High Needs set-out in Para 3.19 to 3.24 and Appendix 3, be noted.

COU71 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2026/27 (EXB95 REFERS)

Council considered a report of the Director - Finance, on the Treasury Management Statement, which incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy for 2026/27.

RESOLVED: That Council adopt the policies,

strategies, statements, prudential and treasury indicators, outlined in the report.

COU72 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2026/27 (EXB94 REFERS)

Council considered a report of the Director - Finance, on the Council's Capital Strategy for 2026/27.

Members noted that the Capital Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Treasury Management Statement, also considered at this meeting. The successful delivery of the Capital Strategy would assist the Council in planning and funding its capital expenditure over the next three years.

RESOLVED: That Council approve the 2026/27 Capital Strategy, as presented in the Appendix attached to the report.

COU73 INTEGRATION OF HR AND PAYROLL MODULE INTO THE UNIT4 FINANCE SYSTEM (EXB98 REFERS)

Council considered a report which sought approval to integrate a HR and Payroll module into the Unit4 ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) Finance System and the inclusion of the project within the Capital Programme.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the integration of the HR and Payroll Module into the Unit4 ERP Finance System, be approved; and
- 2) Council approve the request to include the project within the Capital Programme at an estimated cost of £456,459 as outlined in paragraph 5.1.

COU74 PUBLIC SECTOR DECARBONISATION FUND - PICOW FARM ROAD DEPOT (EXB102 REFERS)

Executive Board had previously considered a report which set out details of grant funding awarded to the Council via the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund (PSDF). The report requested Council approval to include £1,161,300 total estimated cost of the energy efficiency works at Picow Farm Road within the Capital Programme, to be funded by grant funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund and including a Council contribution of between £162,000 - £200,000.

RESOLVED: That Council be requested to include

£1,161,300 total estimated cost of the energy efficiency works at Picow Farm Road within the Capital Programme, to be funded by grant funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund and including a Council contribution of between £162,000 - £200,000.

COU75 ABSENCE OF A MEMBER

Under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, permission is sought for:

- Councillor Lowe be granted a period of absence from attending Council meetings for a period of 3 months, concluding on 4 June 2026, due to personal reasons; and
- Councillor Stretch be granted a period of absence from attending Council meetings for a period of 3 months, concluding on 4 June 2026, due to personal reasons.

RESOLVED: That approval be given for the Member absence as outlined above.

COU76 MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARDS AND THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

The Council considered the reports of the following Boards in the period since the meeting of Council on 3 December 2025:-

- Children, Young People and Families
- Local Economy;
- Health and Social Care;
- Corporate and Inclusion.

COU77 COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Council considered the reports of the following Committees in the period since the meeting of Council on 3 December 2025:-

- Development Management;
- Appointments; and
- Regulatory Sub Committee

COU78 RECOMMENDATION FROM MAYORAL COMMITTEE

The Mayoral Committee had considered a Part II item which made recommendations for the appointment of Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the 2026/27 Municipal Year.

Formal confirmation would be sought at the Annual meeting of Council.

RESOLVED: That Council note that

- 1) Councillor Pamela Wallace be appointed as Mayor; and
- 2) Councillor Mike Wharton be appointed as Deputy Mayor.

COU79 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- 1) whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- 2) whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

COU80 DCBL STADIUM - PITCH REPLACEMENT - KEY DECISION (EXB90 REFERS)

Council considered a report that sought approval to

proceed with the necessary works for the replacement of the pitch at DCBL Stadium as outlined in the report.

Reason(s) for Decision

To agree capital investment to enable replacement of the artificial pitch at the DCBL Halton Stadium.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None. The pitch is required to be compliant with Rugby League specifications as set out in 3.3 and 3.4.

Implementation Date

To commence in September 2026.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Members give approval to proceed with the works as identified in the report;
- 2) Executive Board approval is given for recommendation to Full Council for an adjustment to the capital programme of up to £546,000; and
- 3) approval of the detailed costs and the option to be undertaken, be delegated to the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Employment Learning, Skills and Community.

Meeting ended at 8.15 p.m.