

# **Minutes**

**For Presentation to the Council  
At the meeting to be held on**

**Wednesday, 6 December  
2023**

# Minutes

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**COUNCIL**

*At a meeting of the Council on Wednesday, 18 October 2023 in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall*

Present: Councillors Abbott, Ball, Baker, Begg, Bevan, J. Bradshaw, Bramwell, Cargill, Dennett, Davidson, Fry, Garner, Gilligan, Goodall, S. Hill, V. Hill, Jones, Leck, M. Lloyd Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, C. Loftus, K. Loftus, Logan, McDermott, A. McInerney, T. McInerney, Nelson, Philbin, Polhill, N. Plumpton Walsh, Stockton, Stretch, Skinner, Teeling, Thompson, Thornton, Wainwright, Wall, Wallace, Wharton, Woolfall and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Carlin, Dourley, Harris, Hutchinson, A. Lowe, J. Lowe, L. Nolan, P. Nolan, C. Plumpton Walsh, Ratcliffe, Rowe and Ryan

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney, S. Wallace-Bonner, S. Young, G. Ferguson, W. Rourke and Z. Fearon

Also in attendance: None

*Action***COU28 COUNCIL MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 19 July 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

**COU29 THE MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor made the following announcement:-

- A Christmas bingo would be held on 28 November and a Christmas Party on 18 December, both at the Halton Stadium, to raise money for the Mayor's Fund.

**COU30 LEADER'S REPORT**

The Leader reported on the following issues since the last meeting of the Council:

- he provided an update on Local Government finance;
- Appointments Committee had met and Zoe Fearon had been appointed as the Director of Children's Services. The Leader welcomed Zoe to the meeting; and
- he outlined the impact of the Government's decision to cancel the HS2 section between Birmingham and

Manchester.

COU31 URGENT DECISIONS

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

RESOLVED: That Council note the report.

COU32 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Council considered the minutes of the Executive Board meetings on 13 July 2023 and 14 September 2023.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.

COU33 MINUTES OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

The Council considered the minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting on 5 July 2023.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.

COU34 QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 8

It was noted that no questions had been submitted under Standing Order No. 8.

COU35 2023/24 SPENDING AS AT 30 JUNE 2023

The Council considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which sought approval for the Council's 2023/24 to 2025/26 Capital Programme.

RESOLVED: That the 2023/24 to 2025/26 Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 3.18 of the report and Appendix 3, be approved.

Operational  
Director - Finance

COU36 CHESHIRE AND MERSEYSIDE HEALTH AND CARE PARTNERSHIP

The Council considered a report of the Operational Director – Legal and Democratic Services, that sought authority for the Council to become a member of the new statutory Integrated Care Partnership for Cheshire & Merseyside, to be known as the Cheshire & Merseyside Health and Care Partnership (C&M HCP).

RESOLVED: That

Operational

Director, Legal  
and Democratic  
Services

- 1) the Council become a member of the Cheshire & Merseyside Health & Care Partnership;
- 2) the terms of reference of the Cheshire & Merseyside Health & Care Partnership, set out at Appendix 1, be adopted and that the Operational Director – Legal & Democratic in consultation with the Portfolio Holder – Health and Wellbeing, be authorised to make minor changes to the final version if necessary;
- 3) the Portfolio Holder - Health and Wellbeing be nominated to be the Council's representative on the Cheshire & Merseyside Health and Care Partnership; and
- 4) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to nominate an Executive Director / Director of Public Health to be a member of the Committee if considered appropriate.

#### COU37 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 19 July 2023:-

- Children, Young People and Families;
- Employment, Learning and Skills and Community;
- Health;
- Safer;
- Environment and Urban Renewal;
- Corporate Services; and
- Audit and Governance Board.

#### COU38 COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Council considered the reports of the following Committees in the period since the meeting of Council on 19 July 2023:-

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

#### COU39 NOTICE OF MOTION - PROTECTING WOMEN AND GIRLS FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Council considered a Notice of Motion submitted in

accordance with Standing Order No. 6.

The following Motion was proposed by Councillor Bevan and seconded by Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh:-

PROTECTING WOMEN AND GIRLS FROM DOMESTIC ABUSE

This Council agrees that it is committed to challenging all forms domestic abuse and to promoting a culture in which people can be protected and the victims of domestic abuse be supported.

Council notes that in March, on International Women's Day, Jess Phillips M.P read out names in the House of Commons of 109 women and girls who had lost their lives in cases where a male perpetrator had either been charged or convicted of their killing. Of the names read out 2 were unnamed, unknown women. The youngest victim was 15 and the oldest was 92 years of age. This list does not include women who have survived attempts on their life or those deaths in which cases never see anyone charged. We believe that this illustrates the scale of the problem, and Council agrees to commit to taking action to challenge domestic abuse.

Council agrees to:

- 1) Take steps to prepare an Action Plan to submit the Council as a candidate for White Ribbon accreditation, so that the Council can proactively engage in a range of actions to tackle the causes, and effects of domestic abuse, and to promote support for victims, and to challenge the behaviour of perpetrators.
- 2) We will proactively promote awareness and an end of domestic abuse with local schools, and through the operation of Council services, where we can do so.
- 3) We will make available to all Council Members and staff, the means for them to undertake an awareness course on domestic abuse, so that the early signs of it can be identified, and staff and members made aware of how to react to incidents.
- 4) We will hold an annual awareness event in conjunction with White Ribbon Day annually in

November, the International Day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women, to encourage men and boys to pledge never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women.

- 5) We will take steps to ensure awareness for women who are experiencing violence to know where to get help through effective promotion of services available.
- 6) We will continue to promote the Safer Streets Campaign raising awareness of how both Men and Women can play their part in making Halton's streets safer in partnership with Cheshire Police.

The motion was put and carried.

RESOLVED: That the motion be approved.

#### COU40 NOTICE OF MOTION - SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Council considered a Notice of Motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order No. 6.

The following Motion was proposed by Councillor Abbott and seconded by Councillor Dennett:-

#### SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

This Council continues to recognise its commitment to equality and diversity and to handling all people, fairly and equally in its dealings, both as an employer, and in deliver of public services.

Council has proudly maintained for many years its commitment to challenge discrimination and meet with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, Council is now mindful that the Social Mobility Commission has now recommended to Government that it act to also recognise that socio-economic status (class) be treated as a protected characteristic, and we note the strong commitment made to supporting this by Mayor Rotheram, of the Liverpool City Region.

Council notes that "class" or socio-economic status is not currently a protected characteristic under equality law in the UK. That makes the UK an outlier in Europe, where in 20 out of 35 countries provide protection from discrimination on grounds of socio-economic status. It is still the case that in the UK your socio-economic background has an impact on your opportunities in life.

Council agrees that:

- 1) it supports efforts to define socio-economic status as a protected characteristic and we call upon Government to take steps to recognise this need, as have many other states within the EU;
- 2) we pledge to show regard to socio-economic status in the Council's dealings, including a commitment not to discriminate persons from use or access to services based on their socio-economic status (class); and
- 3) it will work where possible with the LCR, and Government to support efforts to recognise the impact a person's socio-economic status may have on their opportunities in life.

The motion was put and carried.

RESOLVED: That the motion be approved.

*Meeting ended at 7.25 p.m.*

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 19 October 2023 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building*

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Dennett, M. Lloyd Jones, J. Lowe, T. McInerney, Nelson, P. Nolan, Thompson and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Harris

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, S. Young, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, H. Roberts, S. Wallace-Bonner and K. Butler

Also in attendance: S. Scott, C. Deadman, N. McGrath – Halton Housing Trust

**ITEMS DEALT WITH  
UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES  
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

EXB37 MINUTES

*Action*

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

**LEADER'S PORTFOLIO**

EXB38 URGENT DECISIONS

The Executive Board received a report from the Chief Executive, which provided information on the urgent decisions taken since the last meeting of the Board.

It was noted that the Council's Constitution gave authority to the Chief Executive to take urgent decisions, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Operational Director Finance and/or the Operational Director Legal and Democratic Services, where necessary.

One urgent decision had been made since the last meeting of the Board and full details were published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED: That the urgent decision taken since

the last meeting of the Executive Board be noted.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO**

*N.B. Councillor Wright declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as she is a member of Halton Housing Trust Board.*

### **EXB39 HALTON HOUSING TRUST ANNUAL REPORT**

The Board received the Halton Housing Trust's (HHT) Annual Report, which provided an update on their activities since the last report to Executive Board.

The Chair welcomed Sam Scott, Group Chief Executive and colleagues Clive Deadman and Neil McGrath, who jointly presented the report to the Board – *Annual Report to HBC Executive Board, October 2023.*

The report outlined the key priorities over the next two years until 2025 and also some of the key achievements over the past year and , which included:

- 20 maintenance technicians had received additional training to enable them to multi skill;
- 853 households had been supported to secure £2m of additional income by providing support to apply for under claimed benefits;
- The hardship fund had delivered over £30k of crisis funds targeting food and fuel poverty;
- Completion of Halton Housings largest development scheme – the independent living scheme (Hazlehurst) in Runcorn; and
- Achieved IIP Investing in People Gold and Investing in Wellbeing Silver.

RESOLVED: That the Board thanked Halton Housing Trust for the presentation and noted the report.

## **DEPUTY LEADER'S PORTFOLIO**

### **EXB40 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION INVESTMENT ZONE - KEY DECISION**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which sought approval for Halton to become part of the Liverpool City Region Investment Zone (IZ). The IZ would include a tax site for occupier benefits which would operate for 5 years from April 2024 alongside business rates retention for a period of

25 years. The site would sit within the existing Enterprise Zone and would be used to promote the delivery of the Sci-Tech Daresbury masterplan.

Reason(s) for Decision

A decision is required to enable the Council to enter into the necessary legal agreements to facilitate the Investment Zone and associated Tax Incremental Financing processes.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Consideration was given to Sci-Tech Daresbury remaining an Enterprise Zone and not becoming an Investment Zone. On balance it was felt that the opportunity to access additional grant funding and tax incentives through the Investment Zone was more likely to accelerate the next [phase of delivery and provide potential for future investment and Tax Incremental Finance that could support the requires land acquisition and infrastructure to deliver the masterplan.

Implementation Date

A Memorandum of Understanding is expected to be signed ahead of the commencement of Investment Zone status in April 2024.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report;
- 2) supports the progress made on the Investment Zone and approves the Council entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with LCR Combined Authority as required;
- 3) gives delegated authority to the Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Major Projects, to take the necessary steps to participate in the LCR Investment Zone;
- 4) approves the sign off of the allocation of Sci-Tech Daresbury as part of the LCR Investment Zone; and
- 5) authorises the Operational Director - Finance to enter into and manage the processes required to facilitate the Business Rates Retention and Tax Increment Financing processes.

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

## **CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO**

### **EXB41 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director: Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, which provided an update on the progress made within the Council's Transformation Programme. Work had continued to develop the projects set out in Appendix A of the report, as well as the associated delivery plans, which would provide a framework to assess project feasibility.

The Board noted that:

- during September there had been a focus on engaging with employees and a number of workshops had taken place; and
- the recruitment of transformation resources to support the Children's Social Care programme had been undertaken and appointments had been made.

RESOLVED: That the Board noted the contents of the update.

### **EXB42 RE-TENDERING OF COUNCIL INSURANCE POLICIES**

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Finance, which sought approval to commence a procurement process to re-tender the insurance policies that were due to expire. The current contracts were due to expire on 31 March 2024 and based upon current premium levels, the total cost of the services was expected to exceed £1,000,000 over the maximum contract duration of five years.

The Board noted that prior to the procurement process, a review of the Council's insurance programme would be completed, and relevant alternatives considered to establish the most appropriate programme for the Council. This would include reviewing components such as extent of cover, levels of self-insurance and indemnity limits.

It was proposed that the procurement would be undertaken by accessing a framework agreement for insurance services managed by the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation. The Council's insurance broker would support the tender evaluation process by completing a comprehensive evaluation of tender submissions on behalf of the Council and make recommendations.

RESOLVED: That

Operational  
Director - Finance

- 1) approval be given to commence a procurement exercise for the following Council insurance policies:
  - Combined Liability
  - Medical Malpractice
  - Engineering and inspection
  - Property
  - Motor
  - Computer
- 2) the Operational Director – Finance, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, be delegated to deal with any matters relating to the procurement of this contract.

#### EXB43 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented two applications for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, for consideration.

It was noted that under the amended provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council was able to grant discretionary rate relief to any business ratepayer. This relief had previously only been available to organisations that were a registered charity, a community amateur sports club or a not for profit organisation.

The report outlined details of the applications from Steve Morgan Foundation and Have a Heart Foundation, in relation to their respective addresses. Appended to the report was the potential annual cost to the Council of granting the discretionary rate relief.

RESOLVED: That

Operational  
Director - Finance

- 1) the application for 15% discretionary rate relief from the Steve Morgan Foundation in respect of premises at Bridgemere House, with effect from 1 April 2022, be approved;
- 2) the application for 15% discretionary rate relief from Have a Heart Foundation in respect of premises at 103-104 Chadwick Road, with effect from 1 April 2022, be approved; and
- 3) the application for 15% discretionary rate relief from

Have a Heart Foundation in respect of premises at 110-111 Runcorn Shopping Centre, with effect from 1 April 2022, be approved.

#### **ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO**

##### **EXB44 FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICE PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE REPORT**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director - Adult Services, that sought approval to commence a new procurement process for the supply of a Floating Support Service. The proposed contract would be for an initial three years (plus 2 x 12 month extension periods) commencing 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2027, in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.3.5. The estimated value of the contract was £1,870,000 over a five year contract.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board approves this Preliminary Estimates report to commence a new procurement process for a Floating Support Service in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.3.5.

Executive Director  
of Adult Services

##### **EXB45 AMENDED ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adults, which set out amendments to the Property Pool Plus (PPP) Allocations Policy. The aspiration remained that the local authorities would continue to facilitate a single lettings approach for scheme partners and customers when allocating and letting social housing across the city region.

The Board was advised that the participating local authorities and housing associations wanted to ensure that the allocations policy was fit for purpose and supported the strategic city region wide aspirations around social housing and therefore a review of the PPP had been undertaken. The revised policy incorporated a significant number of changes to various elements of the scheme including the qualification, criteria and priority banding system. Full details of the changes, revised scheme and the upgrade to the IT system, were outlined in the report.

Due to the scale of the change and the required preparatory work, it was requested that the scheme would

be closed to new applications for a period of one month before the launch of the revised scheme. It was also recommended that there would be a pause in property advertising for a two-week period prior to the launch to allow partner Housing Association landlords time to update property shortlists under the scheme rules.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board approve the amended Property Pool Plus Allocations Policy.

Executive Director  
of Adult Services

### **COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO**

#### **EXB46 REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT SERVICE CONTRACT**

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

#### **EXB47 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.

### **CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO**

#### **EXB48 DISPOSAL OF LAND LOWLANDS ROAD RUNCORN**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, which sought approval to the revised disposal price for the disused trumpet loop land in Runcorn.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) the reconsidered valuation figure be approved;
- 2) the disposal of the freehold interest in disused land behind Picow Engineering that was once busway/trumpet loop road in Runcorn Station Quarter be approved; and
- 3) the Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration be authorised to arrange for all required documentation for the transactions to be completed to the satisfaction of the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services.

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

**MINUTES ISSUED: 26 October 2023**

**CALL-IN: 2 November 2023 at 5.00 pm.**

**Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 2 November 2023.**

*Meeting ended at 2.40 p.m.*

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 16 November 2023 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building*

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Dennett, Harris, M. Lloyd Jones, J. Lowe, T. McInerney, Nelson, P. Nolan, Thompson and Wright

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, S. Young, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson and W. Rourke

Also in attendance: None

**ITEMS DEALT WITH  
UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES  
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

*Action*

EXB49 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

**CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO**

EXB50 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024/25 – 2026/27 - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2024/25 to 2026/27.

The MTFS sets out a three-year projection of the Council's resources and spending and was based on information that was currently available. The most recent Public Sector Spending Review was published at the end of October 2021 and covered the next three financial years. It was noted that details of the 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement were expected to be released in December 2023 on a provisional basis, with a final settlement expected in January 2024.

The Board was advised that the delay and uncertainty regarding 2024/25 financial resources meant the financial

information included within the MTFS was based on a large number of assumptions and best estimates. The financial forecast would be updated as and when further information was known. Appendix 1 therefore detailed the MTFS from 2024/25 – 2026/27 using a prudent estimate of the financial conditions over the course of the next three years. Appendix 2 presented the Reserves and Balances Strategy.

Reason for Decision

To seek approval for the Council’s MTFS for 2024/25 to 2026/27.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The alternative option of not maintaining a MTFS has been considered. However, this would not follow good financial management practice, as the Medium Term Financial Strategy is a key element in informing the Council’s financial planning and budget setting processes.

Implementation date

The MTFS 2024/25 will be implemented from 1 April 2024.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved;
- 2) the 2024/25 base budget be prepared on the basis of the underlying assumptions set out in the Strategy;
- 3) the Reserves and Balances Strategy be approved; and
- 4) the award of Council Tax Support for 2024/25 remains at the 2023/24 level of 21.55%

Operational  
Director - Finance

EXB51 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, advising of the Council’s overall revenue and capital net spending position as at 30 September 2023, together with a forecast outturn position.

Appendix 1 presented a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 30 September 2023 and Appendix 2 provided detailed figures for each individual Department. It was reported that in overall terms the outturn forecast for the year showed that net spend

would be over the approved budget by £3.572m. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 30 September 2023, highlighting the schemes which had been revised.

It was noted that the biggest pressure on the budget continued to be within the Children & Families Department, where forecast net spend for the year had increased by £0.681m over the past three months. This was predominantly as a result of increased spend against agency staff and staffing costs. Whilst considerable work was ongoing to support recruitment and retention of permanent staff, the impact was not yet being felt of any major reduction to agency numbers. Therefore, it was essential that all Departments ensured spending continued to be restricted to only essential items throughout the remainder of the financial year.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continue to be limited to only absolutely essential items;
- 2) Executive Directors continue to take urgent action to reduce or defer spending for the remainder of the current financial year, or secure additional funding;
- 3) progress with implementation of the three years approved budget savings outlined in Appendix 4, be noted; and
- 4) Council be requested to approve the revisions to the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 3.20.

Operational  
Director - Finance

EXB52 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2023-24 HALF YEAR UPDATE

The Board considered a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented the Treasury Management Half Year Report as at 30 September 2023.

These reports updated Members on the activities undertaken on the investment and borrowing activities undertaken during the first half of the financial year to 30 September 2023, as required by the Treasury Management Policy.

The report provided supporting information on the economic outlook, interest rate forecast, short term borrowing rates, longer term borrowing rates, borrowing and investments, budget monitoring, new long term borrowing,

policy guidelines and treasury management indicators. It was noted that no debt rescheduling had been undertaken during the quarter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EXB53 DETERMINATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024/25

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Finance, on the requirement for the Council to determine the Council Tax Base for its area and the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes.

The Council Tax Base was the measure used for calculating Council Tax and was used by both the billing authority (the Council) and the major precepting authorities (Cheshire Fire Authority, Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority), in the calculation of their Council Tax requirements. It was arrived at in accordance with a prescribed formula which represented the estimated full year number of chargeable dwellings in the Borough expressed in terms of the equivalent Band 'D' dwellings.

Taking account of all the relevant information and applying a 97% collection rate, the calculation for 2024/25 gave a base figure of 36,409 for the Borough as a whole. The Council Tax Base figure for each of the Parishes was noted.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve:

Operational  
Director - Finance

- 1) setting the 2024/25 Council Tax Base at 36,409 for the Borough and that the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Environment Agency be so notified; and
- 2) setting the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes as follows:

Parish	Tax Base
Hale	667
Halebank	534
Daresbury	212
Moore	341
Preston Brook	370
Sandymoor	1,606

*N.B. Councillors J. Lowe declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as a family member works at St Lukes.*

EXB54 DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORTS FOR QUARTER 2 2023 - 2024

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive, on progress against key objectives/milestones and performance targets for the second quarter period to 30 September 2023, for the Chief Executives and Children and Young People Directorates.

The Board was advised that the Directorate Performance Overview Report provided a strategic summary of key issues arising from the relevant quarter for each Directorate and was aligned to Council priorities or functional areas. The Board noted that such information was key to the Council's performance management arrangements and Executive Board had a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability. Performance Management would continue to be important in the demonstration of value for money and strengthening accountability.

RESOLVED: That the report, progress and performance information be noted.

EXB55 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director: Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, which provided an update on the progress made within the Council's Transformation Programme. Appendix A to the report set out the Transformation projects for each of the Directorates, as well as the associated delivery plans, which would provide a framework to assess project feasibility.

The Board noted that engagement with employees continued to be a focus in the programme ensuring staff views and ideas were heard in the planning stage of the project. Project themed 'chats about change' sessions had begun in October with Adult Social Care and Customer Journey focused sessions.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board noted the contents of the update; and
- 2) individual project delivery plans are to be submitted to the relevant Policy and Performance Boards for their

Corporate  
Director - Chief  
Executive's  
Delivery Unit

consideration and monitoring.

**ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO**

*N.B. Councillors Thompson and Wharton declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as members of the Mersey Gateway Crossings Board.*

**EXB56 MERSEYLINK – AUTHORISED HIGHWAY FUNCTIONS**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment and Regeneration, that outlined a request from Merseylink Limited, for the renewal of the Authorisation Period for the delegated Highway Functions, from 27 March 2024, for a period of ten years. Under the terms of the Mersey Gateway Bridge Project Agreement (Section, Part 2 of Schedule 18) there was set of defined Authorised Highways Functions which were delegated to the Project Company (Merseylink Ltd).

The Mersey Gateway Project Agreement defined that this arrangement was limited until the duration of the Authorised Period (ten years from Financial Close) and Merseylink were required to seek renewal of the authorisation period by up to a further ten years on or before the expiry of the Authorisation Period, which would be 27 March 2024. It was reported that Merseylink had provided the necessary written request to the Council and the Mersey Crossings Board had confirmed that they considered there was no reason not to confirm the renewal and this should be for the full ten year period.

RESOLVED: That the request from Merseylink Limited, for the renewal of the Authorisation Period for the delegated Highway Functions, from 27 March 2024 for a period of ten years, be approved.

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

**EXB57 WAIVER REQUEST FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A NAMED SUB-CONTRACTOR TO CARRY OUT SPECIALIST RESTORATION OF RAILINGS AT BIRCHFIELD GARDENS, WIDNES**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which sought approval for a waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 iv of Part 3 of Procurement Standing Orders, to appoint Lost Art Ltd as a Named Sub-Contractor for the refurbishment of historic park railings at Birchfield Gardens, Widnes.

The Environment Services Division was currently tendering a package of works for the refurbishment of Birchfield Gardens and the pre tender estimate value for the project was £500k. The majority of the refurbishment works would be undertaken by a Principal Contractor and their domestic sub-contractors, however the restoration of the historic boundary railings element would require a specialist sub-contractor.

It was noted that Lost Art Ltd had been commissioned to undertake a survey of the railing and had provided a quotation for the works of £110,091.50. It was proposed that Lost Art Ltd would be appointed as Named Sub-Contractor to be used by the Principal Contractor due to cost certainty and the quality and workmanship they could provide.

RESOLVED: That the Board gives delegated authority to the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Executive Member for the Environment and Urban Renewal, to approve the waiver, ref: 134W23, to appoint Lost Art Ltd as the Named Sub-Contractor to undertake the restoration of historic park railing as part of the wider refurbishment project at Birchfield Gardens, Widnes.

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

#### EXB58 EAST RUNCORN CONNECTIVITY SCHEME

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which sought approval to accept the funding to complete the full business case in support of the East Runcorn Connectivity Scheme (ERC) project elements that were deliverable within the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) 1 period (ending March 2027). These proposals comprised two of the four elements that constitute the ERC and are:

- A56 major maintenance – A558 Junction to M56 Junction 11;
- ERC Active travel routes
- Silver Jubilee Bridge to Shopping City
- Runcorn East Station Access
- Chester Road (A56) to Daresbury Park
- Halton Brow, Main Street and Norton Lane
- Bridge Street to Windmill Hill Avenue North
- Leira Way Connectivity Upgrades/Cycle Loop

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement be accepted and the Council be

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

recommended to amend the Capital Programme accordingly;

- 2) Mott MacDonald Ltd are retained as external consultant for the project up to a value of £1.61m, via the Warrington Consultancy Framework; and
- 3) the Operational Director – Policy, Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Environment and Urban Renewal, be delegated to procure and implement the necessary works to deliver the A56 East Runcorn Connectivity (ERC) Scheme and active travel routes within funding deadlines.

### **EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS, AND COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO**

#### **EXB59 VARIATION OF NON STATUTORY FEES OF HALTON REGISTRATION SERVICE FROM 1 APRIL 2025**

The Board considered a report which sought approval to vary the non-statutory fees offered by Halton Registration Service from 1 April 2025. The proposed fee structure for 2025/26 had been determined by taking into account inflationary increases and these were set out in Appendix 1. The early setting of the fees was necessary as ceremonies were arranged up to two years in advance. A published fee structure would provide customers with the amount payable and allow the Service to forward plan more effectively to achieve its income targets.

**RESOLVED:** That the variations to the non-statutory fees of Halton Registration Service as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

**MINUTES ISSUED: 21 November 2023**

**CALL-IN: 28 November 2023 at 5.00 pm.**

**Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 28 November 2023.**

*Meeting ended at 2.25 p.m.*

**HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board on Wednesday, 11 October 2023 at the Karalius Suite - Halton Stadium, Widnes*

Present: Councillor Wright (Chair)  
Councillor J. Lowe  
Councillor T. McInerney  
Councillor Woolfall

I. Baddiley, Halton Borough Council  
K. Butler – Halton Borough Council  
A. Leo, NHS ICB – Halton Place

D. Nolan, Adult Social Care, Halton Borough Council  
L. Olsen, Halton Housing Trust  
I. Onyia, Public Health  
K. Parker, Healthwatch Halton  
H. Patel, Citizens Advice Bureau  
S. Patel, Local Pharmacy Committee  
D. Wilson, Healthwatch Halton  
S. Yeoman, Halton & St. Helens Voluntary Action

Apologies: D. Bowan, Cheshire Fire & Rescue  
L. Gardner, Warrington & Halton Hospitals  
W. Rourke, Halton Borough Council  
L. Thompson, Mersey Care

**ITEM DEALT WITH  
UNDER DUTIES  
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

**HWB10 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2023 having been circulated were signed as a correct record.

The Chair made reference to item HWB6 on page 4 of the minutes and the recent announcement of the privatisation of Deacon Dental Practice in Widnes. Following discussions, it was noted that the Halton ICB Corporate Team would seek alternative NHS provision for the area and report back to the Board in due course.

**HWB11 JOINT WORKING AGREEMENT**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adult Services, which provided an overview of

*Action*

the updated two year Joint Working Agreement (JWA) between Halton Borough Council (HBC) and NHS Cheshire & Merseyside (CM), taking effect from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2025. The JWA replaced the previous one year JWA which was approved by both organisations in March 2023.

It was noted that since March 2023, national guidance had been issued in respect of the Better Care Fund (BCF) Plan and discussions had also taken place between HBC and NHS CM regarding the governance arrangements in respect to the Pooled Budget. This had resulted in the establishment of a Joint Senior Leadership Team (JSLT) between HBC and NHS CM. The JSLT would be responsible for the direction, oversight and monitoring of the BCF Plan and associated Pooled Budget. The JSLT would be supported in this duty by the Better Care Commissioning Advisory Group.

The new governance arrangements along with links to the two year BCF Plan had been reflected in the new JWA.

The benefits of both organisations working together collaboratively and in partnership would mean that achievable and sustainable good health and wellbeing for the people of Halton.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the contents of the report.

## HWB12 JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The Board were updated on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which analysed the health needs of the population to inform and guide commissioning of health, well-being and social care services within local authority areas. The JSNA underpinned the health and well-being strategy and commissioning plans. The main goal of a JSNA was to assess the health needs of a local population in order to improve the physical and mental health and well-being of individuals and communities.

Since the first executive summary of the JSNA in 2012, the approach had continued to receive good feedback from various partnerships and stakeholders. As a consequence, the revised annual summary had used broadly the same approach to provide updated data and information since the previous version.

The report set out the key changes since the previous summary and the developments for the JSNA during 2023/24. It was noted that the process for agreeing and developing a work plan for the remainder of 2023/24 and into 2024/25 would be managed in collaboration with key stakeholders and members of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Board discussed the report and the following comments were noted:

- Councillor Lowe reported that the deprivation levels of Windmill Hill Ward had reduced as a result boundary changes and requested that the Ward issues not be lost;
- A&E attendance for 0-4 year olds is the worst in the country – Healthwatch Halton would be interested to get involved in a piece of work to understand the reasons for this data; and
- Concerns expressed about confusing messages for various campaigns which deterred people from coming forward, for example, the shingles vaccination campaign. The Director of Public Health agreed to feed this back to those responsible for promoting the various campaigns.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the draft summary document be approved for publication.

*Director of Public Health*

#### HWB13 HEALTHWATCH HALTON ANNUAL REPORT

The Board received the 2022/23 Annual Report for Healthwatch Halton which described the work and achievements during the year.

This year, Healthwatch Halton celebrated its 10-year anniversary. Over the last 10 years people had shared both good and bad experiences to help improve health and social care and some of those improvements included:

- Engagement with vulnerable adults to ensure their views were listened to;
- Improved patient and visitor facilities at local hospitals;
- Major improvement plan implemented by NHS Halton CCG at the Woodview Child Development Centre;
- Improved access to GP and Out of Hours services; and
- Redesign of Musculoskeletal Services pathway.

During the past 12 months 1,204 people shared their experiences of health and social care services and engaged with the information, advice and signposting service 43,701 times. There had been 13 reports published about the experiences of people accessing services, with the most popular being access to NHS dentistry in Halton.

The report also outlined the priorities for the coming year which were:

- Hospital Discharges – to review the discharge process and collect experiences of patients and families;
- 14+ ID Health Checks – to review the criteria for health checks and help improve access and uptake; and
- Primary Care Engagement – to gather experiences of people using the services in Halton.

The Board gave thanks to Healthwatch Halton and the good work they do to support residents of the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the Board receive the report.

### HWB14 BETTER CARE FUND PLAN

The Board received a report from the Executive Director – Adults Services, which provided an update on the Better Care Fund (BCF) Plan 2023-25 following its submission on 28 June 2023. The update provided the Board with information on the four national conditions and the three related documents, those being the BCF Plan, BCF planning template and capacity and demand information.

RESOLVED: The BCF Plan 2023/25 be noted for information.

### HWB15 HALTON HOUSING SUPPORT

The Board received a presentation from the Director of Customer Experience at Halton Housing Trust (HHT).

Over 32% of Halton's population are aged over 55 with a number of people over 65 rising faster than any other population group. Just under 30% of HHT homes had at least one person living there aged 65 or over. There was 93% of customers aged 65 or over who lived in general needs housing and 7% lived with support in place.

The presentation provided an overview of how HHT supported older people with housing and broader health needs which included:

- Aids and adaptations;
- Housing with support schemes;
- Safeguarding;
- Partnership working;
- Social/Community events;
- Welfare Benefit and Money Advice; and
- Cost of Living Support.

It was noted that HHT worked closely with Adult Social Care on many initiatives including Falls Prevention.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

#### HWB16 FLU AND COVID-19 VACCINATION, WINTER 2023/24

The Board considered a report which provided a summary of the flu and Covid-19 winter vaccination programme.

The UK Health Security Agency had identified a new Covid-19 Omicron variant and as a result brought forward this years' winter flu and Covid-19 vaccination programme from October to September. Although the new variant was not considered a concern, the precautionary approach was adopted to ensure that eligible population groups were protected as early as possible.

The Board discussed the report and the following comments were noted:

- Concerns were expressed about the communication and advice about vaccinations; the Director of Public Health to check if the Whatsapp service was still active;
- Public were confused about some of the campaigns; this to be fed back to those responsible for promoting the campaigns.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the content and process of planning for winter to protect Halton's population against additional threats that the season may bring be noted; and
- 2) each individual agency note their respective requirements in relation to the programme and use

all opportunities to promote positive prevention messages and community support as widely as possible.

*Director of Public Health*

#### HWB17 COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

The Board received a report from the Director of Public Health which outlined the work undertaken by the Public Health Team, Health Improvement Team and partners in initiatives to provide support to Halton residents as a result of the rising cost of living. The report also described details of planned initiatives to support residents during the Winter and those included:

- Food poverty initiatives;
- Affordable Warmth and Energy Efficiency initiatives;
- Winter Outreach campaign;
- Pension Credit;
- Bus Travel Support;
- Medical Equipment Energy Support;
- NHS Pre-paid Prescription Certificate; and
- Warm Space.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

#### HWB18 OLDER PEOPLE

The Board received a report from the Director of Public Health which contained an update on the Council's health and wellbeing offer for older adults which included:

- Preventing ill health among older people;
- Partnership working;
- Falls prevention; and
- Winter wellbeing.

The One Halton Health and Wellbeing Strategy set out a number of ageing well priorities that were aimed at enabling older adults to live full, independent and healthy lives.

It was noted that the programme of work carried out by the Health Improvement Team (HIT) to improve the health and wellbeing of older residents would inform the strategic development of One Halton workstreams moving forwards.

Halton Housing Trust agreed to get involved with some of the initiatives on offer for older adults.

*Halton Housing*

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

*Trust*

HWB19 TERMS OF REFERENCE REFRESH

The Board considered the final version of the Terms of Reference following feedback received from the draft document presented at the July Board meeting.

Subject to a change of a job description listed in the Membership, the Board confirmed that they were happy to accept the revised Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED: That the Board accept the refreshed Terms of Reference.

*Director of Public Health*

*Meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.*

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**CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 13 November 2023 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair), Baker, Begg, Goodall, Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, McDermott, Rowe, Ryan and Skinner

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: J. Farrell, A. Jones, B. Holmes, G. Vaughan-Hodkinson and J. Gallagher

Also in attendance: None

**ITEMS DEALT WITH  
UNDER DUTIES  
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

	<i>Action</i>
<p>CYP16 MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
<p>CYP17 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</p> <p>It was confirmed that no public questions were received.</p>	
<p>CYP18 THE BIG CONVERSATION UPDATE</p> <p>The Board received a report of the Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, which provided an update on 'The Big Conversation'.</p> <p>The Big Conversation was about engaging with the public so that they understood the challenges that the Council was facing. It was an approach between the Council and those who lived or worked in Halton to work together to create an improved Borough in all aspects of everyday life. A stakeholder analysis and a Communications Plan was developed in order to generate</p>	

and establish as many opportunities as possible to involve all stakeholders in many different ways.

Members were advised that to date, a total of 1012 responses had been received; a breakdown of these by source was provided. The report outlined the promotion, consultation and engagement carried out in the community so far. The themes emerging from the consultation were also presented and any gaps in responses were highlighted, as well as the actions required to fill these.

It was noted that the consultation ends on 30 November 2023, after which an analysis would be undertaken to identify the key priorities. January and February 2024 would see final consultation with stakeholders via drop-in sessions and community engagement, prior to the Corporate Plan being finalised in March, ready for its launch in April 2024.

The following details were provided following Members questions:

- In order to address the low number of respondents from the 16-24 age group staff had attended Riverside College and the Family Hubs in Windmill Hill and Kingsway to encourage people to complete the survey; suggestions on places to visit were still welcomed, as it was agreed that more responses were needed from this age group;
- The Operational Director for Education, Provision and Inclusion offered to share the survey again with education stakeholders;
- It was suggested to visit other colleges such as Priestly in Warrington and Sir John Deane in Northwich, as some students attended these from the Borough – this had been done;
- Following concerns regarding Windmill Hill residents being lost in the figures for Norton North, staff had been out to the local shops to approach people to complete the survey;
- One Member suggested a bespoke survey for Councillors – this was considered impractical as the survey covered a range of priorities for all people to respond to as residents of the Borough;
- Councillors were invited to complete the survey in the same way as HBC staff and other groups, through the various methods discussed;
- Ditton Ward did have a low number of responses so an 'i-walker' was sent in the community on 4 November;

- The purpose of the survey was clarified as being able to prioritise and spend money where the residents of Halton had identified and prioritised;
- It was important not to raise expectations and this was clear from the onset of the project;
- The determining of priorities would be decided following the analysis of data after the survey was closed. The information would then be presented to Executive Board for agreement and inclusion in the Corporate Plan; and
- A suggestion was made to contact 'Power in Partnership' with the survey.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) continue to endorse the approach to facilitate 'The Big Conversation'.

Corporate  
Director - Chief  
Executive's  
Delivery Unit

CYP19 SUFFICIENCY DUTY REPORT 2023-2024 (PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS THE CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT REVIEW (CSA))

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Children's Services, which provided a summary of the revised Sufficiency Duty Report (SDR) – this document was appended to the report *Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report 2023-24 Review*.

It was reported that the SDR detailed information on Halton's childcare sector and outlined the projected supply and estimated demand for childcare places over the next 12 months. It also highlighted any gaps in provision and how these were being addressed.

The report also gave information on the expansion of the early years entitlements, due to launch in April 2024, and the initial estimates on how the demand for new places would impact upon the childcare market in Halton. Information was also shared on other factors affecting childcare and sustainability, at both local and national level, such as the impact of Covid 19, cost of living, and challenges with the recruitment and retention of staff. It was noted however, that despite the challenges faced by the Early Years sector, the childcare market in Halton continued to be secure and sustainable.

The following responses were provided to questions raised by Members:

- The data around 5-10 year old holiday provision did not include figures from groups, such as short breaks and activities funded through the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme. Future mapping and supply of demand, regarding the Wraparound Programme in Halton, would consider the needs of children with SEND and how best to facilitate this;
- A range of Early Years provision is required in order to give residents greater flexibility and choice so they can return to work and childminders formed part of this – there were 59 in Halton;
- The impacts that childminder settings can have on neighbourhoods (such as noise, parking problems, garden noise) was recognised, but complaints were few as most childminders had small numbers of children. Any complaints were dealt with according to legislation;
- The difference between a childminder and a nursery was that a childminder has a domestic premises ie, their home, and a nursery was in a non-domestic setting. A childminder also had a cap on the number of children they could take, whereas a nursery could take bigger numbers;
- A comment was made by one Member regarding funding – nurseries relied on Government funding and a childminder is a private business and exempt from paying business rates;
- Despite data showing a deficit of 51 places in Windmill Hill there were vacancies in settings in the area – this was explained as an anomaly with the data recording. Members were reassured that there were no issues with the availability of places at any of the nurseries in Windmill Hill;
- Three new Speech and Language programmes were about to launch in Halton – *Tots Talking* (for children aged between 0-3), *Early Talk Boost* (3-4 year olds) and *Talk Boost* (5-7 year olds), adding to the existing Speech and Language services currently available; and
- Recruitment and retention of staff in Early Years was raising concerns. It was noted that the requirement for certain qualifications had been introduced in recent years which may be affecting recruitment along with poor pay. Also, staff were leaving and the reasons for this were varied, eg. retirement, poor pay, legacy of Covid-19. Different routes into the profession were being explored, as was on the job training.

RESOLVED: That the revised Sufficiency Duty

Report (previously known as the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment) be noted.

## CYP20 VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

The Board received a report of the Executive Director – Children’s Services, which presented *Halton’s Virtual School Annual Report for 2022-23*, this was appended to the report.

The Report, compiled by the Headteacher of the Virtual School, included information on the educational outcomes and achievements for Halton’s Children in Care, and the School’s wider work across children’s services.

The work of the Virtual School had continued throughout the academic year and the full annual report provided detailed analysis of how Halton’s Children in Care had performed against each of the individual key performance indicators. It also included a summary of the School’s progress towards its identified key priorities for the academic year 2022-23, and outlined the priorities for the Virtual School in 2023-24.

The following additional information was provided following Members’ questions:

- In relation to school moves, the 4 young people who had periods of time not on a school roll was due to the personal circumstances of the individuals and the involvement of Social Services;
- The DfE has provided a grant to support the work of the Virtual School in its work with the Post 16 cohort. It is hoped that this would continue to support the improvement of Post 16 PEPs, including for Unaccompanied Asylum seeking Children;
- The drop in the results for Key Stage 4 was discussed – Officers advised there were specifics to the backgrounds of each of the 20 people concerned;
- Children in Care (CIC) were given priority when allocating schools to them – the children were listened to in respect of their school preferences;
- The Virtual School continues to track the onward journey of its cohort, including those who go to university. The Team has grown in recent years, which has enabled them to work more closely with this age range;
- No CIC has ever been permanently excluded in Halton, but when a child was at risk of this then officers would work with the school to avoid it;

- The Local Authority worked in collaboration with secondary schools to prevent exclusions; and
- The Head of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) was currently working on an alternative provision model for students who were permanently excluded.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the information provided; and
- 2) accept the Headteacher of the Virtual School's Annual Report as an accurate account of the performance on the education outcomes and achievements of Halton's Children in Care.

*Meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.*

**EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS, AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND  
PERFORMANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 20 November 2023 in the Boardroom - Municipal Building, Widnes*

Present: Councillors Jones (Chair), Teeling (Vice-Chair), Ball, Garner, S. Hill, Hutchinson, Rowe, Ryan and Stretch

Apologies for Absence: Councillor C. Plumpton Walsh

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Jones, S. Saunders, S. McDonald, J. Gallagher, T. Booth, P. Corner and L. Carr

Also in attendance: None

**ITEMS DEALT WITH  
UNDER DUTIES  
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

	<i>Action</i>
<p>ELS18 MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes from the meeting held on 19 September 2023, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
<p>ELS19 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</p> <p>It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.</p>	
<p>ELS20 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES</p> <p>The Executive Board minutes relating to the Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community portfolio were presented to the Board for information.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.</p>	
<p>ELS21 THE BIG CONVERSATION UPDATE</p> <p>The Board received a report of the Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, which provided an update on 'The Big Conversation'.</p>	

The Big Conversation was about engaging with the public so that they understood the challenges that the Council was facing. It was an approach between the Council and those who lived or worked in Halton to work together to create an improved Borough in all aspects of everyday life. A stakeholder analysis and a Communications Plan was developed in order to generate and establish as many opportunities as possible to involve all stakeholders in many different ways.

Members were advised that to date a total of 1000+ responses had been received; a breakdown of these by source was provided. The report outlined the promotion, consultation and engagement carried out in the community so far. The themes emerging from the consultation were also presented and any gaps were highlighted, as well as the actions required to fill these.

It was noted that the consultation ends on 30 November 2023, after which an analysis would be undertaken to identify the key priorities. January and February 2024 would see further consultation with stakeholders prior to the Corporate Plan being finalised in March, ready for its launch in April 2024.

The following responses were provided in response to Members' questions:

- Two thirds of Halton Borough Council staff lived in the Borough, so were included in the responses;
- There was a low response from the 16-24 year old age group so staff had visited Riverside, Carmel, Priestley and Sir John Dean Colleges, the Vikings and Linnets Clubs, and the Family Hubs in Runcorn and Widnes to try to boost the numbers;
- It was felt that the fact that youth clubs were missing from communities made it difficult to engage with younger age groups;
- Two iwalkers were used on one day at a cost of £1,200, in order to encourage participation in areas identified as having low responses; and
- It was predicted that although the 'working towards a greener future' theme was the least priority currently, this may change once the responses from the 16-24 age group were boosted.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report; and

- 2) continue to endorse the approach to facilitate 'The Big Conversation'.

## ELS22 BUSINESS GROWTH PROGRAMME COMPLETION & BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICE LAUNCH

The Board received an update on the performance and closure of the Business Growth Programme phase three and were introduced to the Business Support Service (BBS), funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Business Growth Programme was a business support initiative that had been running in three phases since 2014, with phase 3 ending on 30 June 2023. The report outlined in detail the aim of the Programme, the work carried out with Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) and the challenges faced along the way by the Council and the SME's. Members were also presented with the achievements of the Business Growth Programme and noted that performance was 7% above target for the number of businesses supported, despite being impacted by several lockdowns during the pandemic.

Members were advised that the replacement for the Business Growth Programme funding was the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

The Council's Business Investment and Growth Team (together with the other LCR authorities, LCR Growth Platform and LCRCA) would work in partnership to deliver Place Based Business Support using lessons learned from the ERDF Business Growth Programme. The aim was to deliver business support at the local level through direct commissioned delivery and by linking businesses into the wider SPF programmes and other support initiatives in the LCR.

The following information was provided following Members' questions:

- Clarity was provided on the eligibility criteria for the Business Support Service, as there was an error in presentation when one slide was taken in isolation, however it was clarified that the Programme was for new business start-ups that were eligible to use the service as well as established businesses;
- One specific example of where help was needed was provided by one Member; the contact details would be passed to the Officer following the meeting;
- Copies of the flyers being used to promote the

service would be sent to Members once they were released;

- A commissioned contractor would provide a dedicated business start role from January 2024;
- It was suggested to share the information regarding the Service with all departments and staff within the Council and that this should come from the Executive Director;
- Information on the types of business start-ups and businesses in Halton was requested, to assist Members and help give a better idea of the prospects of them;
- The person who starts a business did not count towards the employment numbers, as they are not classed as being an employee of that business according to the Combined Authority monitoring criteria for this Programme;
- Banks were a key source of information for new start-ups and the Council did engage with these at networking events for example;
- New start ups were informed of the employer's and employee's Charter when they employed staff;
- Business rates were discussed – it was noted that people could work from home using one room and be exempt from paying business rates;
- The total funding for the BSS was £366k until March 2025, covering all elements of the Programme including commissioned services for start-up and separate consultancy (7 further strands of support) advice for established businesses;
- The team did work with foreign direct investment whereby businesses locate from overseas, offering advice such as recruitment and legal; and
- The BSS would provide better value for money – a clearer picture of this would be known by March 2025. An interim report and update would be brought to the Board in 6 months' time.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) a progress report be submitted to the Board in 6 months' time.

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

ELS23 HALTON PEOPLE INTO JOBS – TRANSITION FROM ENGAGING WITH UNEMPLOYED HALTON RESIDENTS TO ECONOMICALLY INACTIVE RESIDENTS

The Board considered a report of the Executive

Director – Environment and Regeneration, which provided an overview of the current services provided by Halton People into Jobs (HPIJ) and its future focus to engage with more economically inactive residents for *Ways to Work* and the new *Work and Health Pioneer Programme*.

The report outlined the definitions of being 'economically inactive' in the context of each of the above Programmes and it was noted that the Programmes were voluntary, for individuals that met the respective economically inactive criteria, and were looking to start work in the immediate future.

Members were provided with data on the economically inactive population in Halton between July 22 to July 23 which showed a comparison with regional and national figures. Also, performance and achievements for both Programmes so far was presented.

Further information was given, following Members' questions:

- HPIJ and the Regeneration and Business Growth Teams often liaised with each other, as there was some crossover with the services;
- Clients' requesting business start-up help via the HPIJ services were signposted to the relevant departments for assistance;
- Information on 'Access to Work' was provided to employers in contact with HPIJ;
- People who wanted to work (shown on the data as 4,200 in the Borough) used a variety of methods to look for work independently, so only a small portion of these came to HPIJ and Job Centre Plus (JCP);
- Those who did use HPIJ to look for assistance in getting a job did so voluntarily and completed a 100 question diagnostic first, to determine any issues that might require dealing with prior to searching for work – such as mental health problems, physical health problems and benefit payments;
- An affordability exercise was also completed for each client, to ensure they would not lose out financially by returning to work; and
- It was felt that the WHP Pioneer Programme target of 28 paid job outcomes was low, in comparison to the number of people looking for work (4,200) – it was explained that this was due to the complexity of clients the service dealt with. It was also a pilot programme so numbers could be revised in time.

In conclusion, Members were presented with two good new stories, one from the Ways to Work Programme and one from the Work and Health Pioneer Programme.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

#### ELS24 HALTON'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

The Board received an update on the activities and events planned for Halton's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, on 1 April 2024.

It was announced that in order to recognise this momentous occasion, plans had been made for HBC, external organisations and groups, to hold activities and events throughout 2024. The aim was to involve as many schools, local community groups and individuals as possible, and small grants would be available to assist in the planning and delivery of activities. It was noted that a temporary externally funded Culture Officer post had been created, utilising UK Share Prosperity Funding. They would assist in the preparations for the celebrations and work along side colleagues in Leisure Services.

The latest information on the activities and events planned was provided to Members in table format, starting from January 2024 through to December 2024. During debate the following comments were made:

- Reference to 'Runcorn Day' would be removed following feedback;
- A discussion regarding the return of the Vintage Rally at Victoria Park took place. To date, Officers had been unable to contact the organisers. One Member offered to provide the contact details for them. It was the consensus of the Board that every effort should be made to secure the Event for next September 2024;
- There were plans for permanent installations, one on either side of the bridge – all primary schools in Halton had been invited to participate in the design of tiles;
- It was important to advertise and promote these events as much as possible;
- Norton Priory had many events planned but felt that it was difficult to get to for many residents – transport would be looked at;
- The events would be grant funded from Shared Prosperity and the Council's event budget;
- There was an opportunity to include multi-cultural

- aspects in many of the events planned;
- The venue for the June 2024 Halton 50 Main Event was to be decided; and
- The Remembrance Sunday Service would be removed from the list.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

ELS25 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT - QUARTER 2 OF 2023-34

The Board received the performance management reports for quarter two of 2023-24 (1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023) and were requested to consider and raise any questions or points of clarification in respect of these.

The key priorities for development or improvement in 2022-23 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans for the various function areas reported to the Board as follows:

- Enterprise, Employment and Skills; and
- Community and Environment.

The report detailed progress against service objectives and milestones and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

RESOLVED: That the quarter two 2023-24 performance management reports be received.

*Meeting ended at 9.00 p.m.*

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**SAFER POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Safer Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 14 November 2023 at the Boardroom - Municipal Building, Widnes*

Present: Councillors Carlin (Vice-Chair), Baker, Bevan, Cargill, Goodall, A. Lowe, Ratcliffe, Skinner and Wallace

Apologies for Absence: Councillor N. Plumpton Walsh and Bramwell

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Butler, R. Freeman, J. Gallagher, N. Goodwin and A. Wallace.

Also in attendance: None

**ITEM DEALT WITH  
UNDER DUTIES  
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

	<i>Action</i>
SAF16 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	
There were no Chair's announcements to be made.	
SAF17 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
SAF18 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
It was reported that no public questions had been received.	
SAF19 CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY DRAFT 2024-2028 COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN	
The Board received a presentation from the Chief Fire Officer of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, which outlined the proposed changes to fire and rescue provision across Cheshire.	
Cheshire Fire Authority was in the process of consulting on its draft 2024-2028 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), which outlined a series of proposals to help achieve its vision of a Cheshire where	

there were no deaths, injuries or damages from fires and other emergencies. The aim of the CRMP was to deliver more fire prevention and protection activities in order to reduce risks in the community and it proposed several changes to the way in which emergency cover was provided for a better response across Cheshire.

Members were advised that 1.1 million residents lived across Cheshire and there were 28 fire stations and 35 fire engines. Seventeen of those engines were full-time and 18 were on-call. Members also noted that the main cause of fire was smoking materials and older people were 26 times more likely to die in a fire. Other causes of fire included wildfires and lithium batteries.

The draft CRMP aimed to deliver more fire prevention and protection activities to reduce risk in the community and proposed several changes to the way in which emergency cover was provided, in order to deliver a better response across Cheshire. Details of the prevention, protection and response proposals were set out in the report.

The overall package of proposals would cost an additional £57k, however this would be funded through efficiencies within existing budgets.

The consultation process started in October 2023 and would end in January 2024. Thereafter, the initial feedback would be reviewed and the new CRMP would be launched in April 2024. The new model would be implemented in January 2025.

Members of the Board were reminded about the joint working arrangements in place in terms of emergency planning which included the Fire Service as well as other partner agencies. This included work with the 9 COMAH sites in Halton and the Safety Advisory Groups, which were run to ensure public safety for events such as Creamfields which attracted 70,000 people into the Borough every year.

Following discussions, it was agreed that the Council would explore how the home visits made by the Fire Service could be optimised in Halton.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be received.

SAF20 THE CORPORATE PLAN - THE BIG CONVERSATION UPDATE

The Board received a presentation which provided an

Operational  
Director -  
Community &  
Green Space

update on 'The Big Conversation'.

The Board previously received a report about the 'The Big Conversation' at its meeting in June and were reminded that the initiative was about engaging with the public so that they understood the challenges that the Council was facing. It was an approach between the Council and those who lived or worked in Halton to work together to create an improved Borough in all aspects of everyday life. A stakeholder analysis and a Communication Plan had been developed in order to generate and establish as many opportunities as possible to involve all stakeholders in many different ways.

Members were advised that up until 13 November over 1,000 responses had been received and a breakdown of responses by source was provided. The report outlined the promotion, consultation and engagement carried out so far, as well as the emerging themes. The gaps and actions were set out and some examples were given to how these had been addressed e.g. visits made to Riverside College and Family Hubs in both Runcorn and Widnes; information had been shared via social media to target relevant groups; and iWalkers had targeted those wards with low responses.

It was noted that the consultation would end on 30 November 2023, after which an analysis would be undertaken to identify the key priorities. January and February 2024 would see further consultation with stakeholders prior to the Corporate Plan being finalised in March, ready for its launch in April 2024.

Members of the Board discussed the report and they suggested that further youth organisations be approached; these would be identified by the Board. They also suggested that the Catalyst Museum be contacted.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) continue to endorse the approach to facilitate 'The Big Conversation'.

*Councillor Aimee Skinner left the meeting.*

#### SAF21 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR TOOLS AND POWERS

The Board received a report from the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which provided

an overview of the tools and powers that were available to the Council in response to anti-social behaviour.

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 sets out powers to tackle anti-social behaviour and the guidance for Local Authorities was refreshed in March 2023.

The legislation required the relevant local agencies to be satisfied that the specific legal tests and safeguards set out in the legislation were met before the 2014 Act powers were used. These tests were intended to help ensure the appropriate and proportionate use of the powers and that they were used to target specific problems or specific circumstances. Those powers were:

- Early and Informal Interventions;
- Civil Injunctions;
- Criminal Behaviour Order;
- Community Protection Notice; and
- Public Space Protection Order

Members were advised that the Council worked collaboratively with partner organisations to tackle anti-social behaviour.

The Board discussed the report and following discussions, Members were advised to email the community enforcement mailbox with any concerns. They were also reminded that they could direct residents, who had ongoing anti-social behaviour issues, to the Council website where they could request an Anti-Social Behaviour Case Review. It was noted that there were criteria for this which was outlined on the website.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the contents of the report.

## SAF22 YOUTH DIVERSIONARY ACTIVITY

The Board considered a report from the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration regarding the diversionary activity for young people in the Borough.

VIBE was commissioned by the Council to deliver engagement with young people three nights per week (Thursday, Friday and Saturday) in both Runcorn and Widnes. Youth Workers target hotspots identified by the Safer Halton Partnership and support young people by developing relationships and connect them into positive activities.

VIBE had extensive partnership work in the Borough with a number of agencies and funding sources including:

- Good Choices – funded by Cheshire Police;
- Positive Vibes Programme – funded by Cheshire Police;
- Short Breaks Group Support Service (Saturday Club) – funded by Halton Council;
- Vibe Outdoors – Sports Short Breaks – funded by Halton Council (Short Breaks Grant);
- Inclusive Needs Club – funded by Halton Council (Young People’s Grant);
- Where’s Your Head At? – funded by The Arconic Foundation;
- Detached Youth Club – Hallwood Park & Palacefields – funded by Riverside;
- Detached Youth Club – Windmill Hill – funded by Windmill Hill Big Local; and
- Halton Youth Cabinet – funded by Halton Council

During the school summer holidays 2023, VIBE was one of many providers who engaged with children and young people in holiday activities and food sessions at Crow Wood Park, Runcorn Ski Centre and Windmill Hill areas. This was funded by the Department of Education.

The Council also commissioned VIBE to:

- Provide a youth club targeting support for young people impacted by parental drug and alcohol use; and
- Develop and deliver a resilience programme targeted at young people at risk of county lines and exploitation.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the contents of the report.

#### SAF23 MISCHIEF, HALLOWEEN & BONFIRE IMPACTS

The Board received a verbal update on the experience and impacts of Mischief Night, Halloween and Bonfire Night across the Borough.

Members were advised that according to Police reports, it had been one of the quietest periods over the last few years. There had been some hotspots in some locations across the Borough but, overall the feedback received had been positive.

Members of the Board also reported that they had received information about some incidents, one in particular where some cars had been vandalised on Mischief Night. It was suggested that some incidents had gone unreported.

It was noted that in previous years, money had been allocated to clean up the Borough following bonfires and damaged cause on Mischief Night. However, as this service was not required in 2022, no budget had been allocated for this year. The service had again not been required during the Mischief and Bonfire period 2023.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the report.

*Meeting ended at 8.20 p.m.*

**ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 15 November 2023 at the Civic Suite - Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Woolfall (Chair), P. Lloyd Jones (Vice-Chair), Abbott, Ball, Hutchinson, K. Loftus, L. Nolan, Ryan, Skinner, Stockton and Thornton

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Butler, S. Burrows, J. Gallagher, I. Jones, A. Plant and I. Saxby.

Also in attendance: None

**ITEM DEALT WITH  
UNDER DUTIES  
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

*Action*

EUR17 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023 having been circulated were signed as a correct record.

EUR18 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.

EUR19 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board relevant to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.

EUR20 THE BIG CONVERSATION UPDATE

The Board received a presentation which provided an update on 'The Big Conversation'.

The Board previously received a report about the 'The Big Conversation' at its meeting in June and were reminded that the initiative was about engaging with the public so that they understood the challenges that the

Council was facing. It was an approach between the Council and those who lived or worked in Halton to work together to create an improved Borough in all aspects of everyday life. A stakeholder analysis and a Communication Plan had been developed in order to generate and establish as many opportunities as possible to involve all stakeholders in many different ways.

Members were advised that up until 13 November 2023, over 1,000 responses had been received and a breakdown of responses by source was provided. The report outlined the promotion, consultation and engagement carried out so far as well as the emerging themes. The gaps and actions were set out and some examples were given to how these had been addressed e.g. visits made to Riverside College and Family Hubs in both Runcorn and Widnes; information had been shared via social media to target relevant groups; and iWalkers had targeted those wards with low responses.

It was noted that the consultation would end on 30 November 2023, after which an analysis would be undertaken to identify the key priorities. January and February 2024 would see further consultation with stakeholders prior to the Corporate Plan being finalised in March, ready for its launch in April 2024.

Members of the Board discussed the report and the following comments were noted:

- 222 survey responses had been received by Council staff and there was a concern that some of those staff would not live in the Borough and therefore have an impact on their views. However, Members were reminded that the survey was aimed at anyone who lived or worked in Halton;
- It was suggested that the survey should be promoted via the front page of the Council's website; and
- A Board Member expressed their disappointment that more focus had not been given to Halton Lea Ward and that some opportunities to engage with some summer activity groups had been missed.

Thanks were noted for all the efforts made to consult with the public and the Chair reminded the Board that it was everyone's responsibility to promote the survey and encourage as made people to participate as possible.

It was also noted that this had been the second most successful survey undertaken by the Council in terms of

number of responses received. A further two weeks remained before the consultation ended and it was hoped that more responses would be received during that period.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) continue to endorse the approach to facilitate 'The Big Conversation'.

Corporate  
Director - Chief  
Executive's  
Delivery Unit

## EUR21 ANNUAL ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISION & CASUALTY REPORT

The Board received a report on the latest road safety statistics released by the Department for Transport through the publication of the 2022 Comprehensive Annual Report.

The report set out full details of the numbers of traffic collisions and casualties in 2022 and compared these figures with those from previous years. Of those killed or seriously injured, the number of adult and child casualties increased. However, due to the low numbers recorded annually in Halton, this number did fluctuate from year to year. In 2022, the country emerged from a succession of Covid Pandemic lockdowns and the small rise in road casualty numbers, both in Halton and nationally, almost mirrored the rise in traffic levels.

Halton had achieved its performance targets as set by the Department of Transport. There were 157 road traffic collisions involving personal injury within Halton, 9 more than the previous year. These incidents resulted in 188 casualties, a 7% increase on the 2021 figure but 24% below 2019 when traffic levels were comparable.

In addition, the report highlighted the work the Road Safety Team had undertaken in 2022/23 and the programme for 2023/24 which would continue to cover road traffic reduction schemes, road safety education, training and publicity as well as engaging with Cheshire Police to target effective enforcement action.

Members also considered information on the following road safety initiatives:

- "Smiley" Speed Indicative Device/Sign (SiDs);
- Speed Camera A562;
- Gyrotory Red Light Camera;
- Mobile Speed Camera Sites;

- Collision Sites;
- Safer Active Travel;
- Education; and
- Halton 2023/24 Strategy.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the overall progress made on casualty reduction in Halton over the past decade be noted; and
- 2) the 2024/25 strategy of road safety schemes and road safety education, training and publicity be endorsed.

## EUR22 HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION - WORKING PARTY UPDATE

The Board received an update report on the progress of the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Working Party Action Plan which had been endorsed by the Board on 15 February 2023. The updated Action Plan was attached in Appendix 1 of the report.

It was noted that since the last update report to the Board in June 2023, the following progress had been made:

- The Council's Executive Board formally adopted the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Requirements and Amenity Standards Policy at its meeting on 14 September 2023; and
- A Supplementary Planning Document had been drafted and submitted to the Board for approval, under separate cover.

Members were advised that over the summer, independent studies had been undertaken by MetaStreet and Opinion Research Services (ORS) to provide an evidence base on the make-up of Halton's housing stock. ORS carried out a detailed survey of properties within the West Bank area to identify the number of private rental properties and the number of smaller and unlicensed HMO's. The analysis of the survey concluded that there was only a small number of HMO's within the West Bank ward, however, there was a high number of private rental properties compared to the rest of the Borough. The full survey results and associated conclusions were outlined in Appendix 2 to the report.

MetaStreet carried out a study on stock condition and the results of this would be presented to the Board in due

course.

The Board discussed the report and concerns were raised that there was a discrepancy between the results of the survey and the experience of those that live and work in the West Bank ward. It was noted that the survey had received a response rate of 45% and detailed analysis was undertaken into the properties that did not respond. There was no evidence which showed the properties who had not responded to the survey were known to the Council in terms of anti-social behaviour issues etc. Following discussions, it was agreed that some further work would be undertaken with West Bank Councillors to explore the discrepancies.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the progress against the Action Plan.

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

EUR23 HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION –  
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Board received a report on the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) regarding Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) which had been prepared by the HMO Working Party. An SPD is an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications for HMOs and should not add unnecessarily to the financial burden on developments.

Since 2018, a large HMO must be licensed by the Local Authority. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 permits development rights for the change of use of a dwelling to a small HMO for 3-6 occupants without the need to apply to the Council. Properties with 7 or more unrelated occupants would still require planning permission.

In Halton, there were 121 licensed HMOs (properties with 5 or more tenants), however, the number of smaller HMOs was unknown. This was not unique to Halton due to no requirement needed for a license or planning permission and therefore there was no reason for any landlord to notify the Council.

Members were advised that the SPD would apply to any planning applications submitted to create large HMOs (properties for 7 or more unrelated occupants) and would introduce planning controls to ensure the amenity of neighbours was protected.

The Board discussed the report and queried what

powers the Local Authority had to prevent too many HMO's in one area. It was confirmed that providing there was a good evidence base, the Local Authority could apply to the Secretary of State under Article 4 to withdraw specified permitted development rights across a defined area.

RESOLVED: That the Board endorse the draft SPD for public consultation.

#### EUR24 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT – QUARTER 2 OF 2023-24

The Board received the Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter 2 of 2023/24.

The key priorities for development of improvement in 2023/24 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans for the various function areas reported to the Board as detailed below:

- Development and Investment Services;
- Highways and Transportation, Logistics and Development Services; and
- Waste and Environmental Improvement and Open Space Services.

The reports detailed progress against service objectives and milestones, and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

The Board raised a concern regarding the School Cleaning Service Level Agreement which had been running at a deficit and as more schools were converting to academies the demand for the service was decreasing. It was agreed that Property Services would be asked to provide some further information regarding this matter.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) receive the second quarter performance management report;
- 2) consider the progress and performance information and raise any questions or points for clarification; and

- 3) highlight any areas of interest and/or concerns where further information is to be reported at a future meeting of the Board.

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

*Meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.*

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## CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

*At a meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 7 November 2023 in the Civic Suite - Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chair), Philbin (Vice-Chair), Hutchinson, Logan, A. Lowe and N. Plumpton Walsh

Apologies for Absence: Councillors: J. Bradshaw, Leck, A. McInerney, Thornton and Wainwright

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Butler, E. Dawson, J. Gallagher, H. Hamlett, C. Hill, M. Reaney and R. Rout.

Also in attendance: None

### ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
CS17 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes from the meeting held on 5 September 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
CS18 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
<p>The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.</p>	
CS19 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
<p>The Board was presented with the minutes relating to the Corporate Services Portfolio which had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of the Board.</p>	
CS20 CORPORATE ACCIDENT / INCIDENT REPORT 1.4.23 TO 31.8.23	
<p>The Board was provided with a report from the Corporate Director – Chief Executive’s Delivery Unit, on the performance of health and safety management within the Authority from 1 April 2023 to 31 August 2023.</p> <p>The report highlighted health and safety incidents that</p>	

had taken place over the past 4 months and as a result of those incidents proposed actions for the future. The report included information around the number of actual near misses, accidents that had resulted in over 7 day absences, together with significant accidents.

In addition, the report contained information on the performance of health and safety management in relation to Key Performance Indicators for the current financial year.

Members were advised that with effect from 1 October 2023 there had been some changes to the fire regulations following the Grenfell fire in 2017 and the Protect Duty (Martyn's Law) was with Parliament for consultation. This would force legal duties on employers to have responsible persons in place in buildings with robust procedures for emergencies in the event of an incident.

Members of the Board referred to the welfare legislation contained within The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and after some discussion it was agreed that a report on welfare would be presented to the Board at a future meeting.

It was also agreed that lone working data would be reported to the Board, once it was available.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the contents of the report including the recommendations and actions for 2023/24.

Corporate  
Director - Chief  
Executive's  
Delivery Unit

CS21 THE CORPORATE PLAN - THE BIG CONVERSATION UPDATE

The Board received a presentation which provided an update on 'The Big Conversation'.

The Board previously received a report about the 'The Big Conversation' at its meeting in June and were reminded that the initiative was about engaging with the public so that they understood the challenges that the Council was facing. It was an approach between the Council and those who lived or worked in Halton to work together to create an improved Borough in all aspects of everyday life. A stakeholder analysis and a Communication Plan had been developed in order to generate and establish as many opportunities as possible to involve all stakeholders in many different ways.

Members were advised that up until 7 November, a

total of 933 responses had been received and a breakdown of responses by source was provided. The report outlined the promotion, consultation and engagement carried out so far, as well as the emerging themes. The gaps and actions were set out and some examples were given to how these had been addressed e.g. visits made to Riverside College and Family Hubs in both Runcorn and Widnes; information had been shared via social media to target relevant groups; and iWalkers had targeted those wards with low responses.

It was noted that the consultation would end on 30 November 2023, after which an analysis would be undertaken to identify the key priorities. January and February 2024 would see further consultation with stakeholders prior to the Corporate Plan being finalised in March, ready for its launch in April 2024.

Members of the Board discussed the report and they suggested the following agencies be approached:

- Halton Voluntary Action;
- the Youth Service;
- Priestley College (Warrington) and Sir John Deane College (Northwich); and
- Police Community Support Officers.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) continue to endorse the approach to facilitate 'The Big Conversation'.

## CS22 RESOURCING THE COUNCIL - CHALLENGES

The Board received a report from the Head of Human Resources – Operations, which provided an overall view of the resourcing challenges the Council was currently facing.

Members were advised that the Council had continued to see a rise in job vacancies since 2021/22. In 2016/17 the number of vacancies advertised were 343, in 2021/22 there were 610 and in 2022/23 there were 678. A summary of these vacancies was listed in the appendix to the report.

The continued rise in vacancy numbers creates a substantial challenge to the Council's recruitment service, which does not have the sufficient resources to manage the workflow of such volumes. Some temporary resources had

been added to the team to mitigate any delays in service provision, which remained prevalent.

The report listed a number of key reasons for the continued increase in vacancies. It was noted that this situation was not unique to Halton and it was a national issue.

The Board was advised that that the recruitment team also provided a service to schools via a chargeable Service Level Agreement (SLA). For the year 2023/24, the team provided a service for 44 schools. In 2022/23, the service processed 362 school vacancies and whilst the costs of this were paid for by the schools, it created issues in workflow as school recruitments need to be completed between May and September in time for the new school year. Members were also informed that if schools decided to covert to academy status then the Council would no longer offer an SLA and any previous service would be withdrawn.

The report outlined that the HR Operations Division had revised their approach to attract candidates to come and work for the Council and it continued to be explored. A number of changes had also recently been implemented and these included:

- Re-designing the recruitment process and streamlined applications;
- Using social media platforms to advertise roles;
- Established career graded posts;
- Specific and focused recruitment campaigns for some roles, particularly in the Adults and Children's Directorates;
- Streamlined pre-employment checks; and
- Recruitment for senior roles brought back in-house to reduce spend.

Members noted the report and requested a list of current vacancies. They also requested that consideration be given to the chargeable cost of SLA's.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the report and actions being taken to mitigate the challenges.

Corporate  
Director - Chief  
Executive's  
Delivery Unit

CS23 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 2023/24

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance which provided an update regarding the delivery of the Government's Household Support Fund allocation of £2.6m from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had issued guidance that included the requirement that part of the funding must be distributed via an application process, although the Council could still proactively target particular groups of households.

A spending plan had been prepared and was attached as Appendix A. It was noted that £365,00 had been allocated to the Discretionary Support Scheme within the Benefits Division to process applications.

Appendix B of the report contained detailed information relating to spending for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023. This included expenditure from partner organisations including Halton Citizens Advice Bureau, Runcorn Foodbank, Widnes Foodbank, Affordable Warmth, Holiday Activity Food Programme and Halton Voluntary Action.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) progress with delivery of the Household Support Fund, as outlined in the report, be noted; and
- 2) a further progress report be brought to the next meeting of the Board.

CS24 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR QUARTER 2 OF 2023/24

The Board received the Performance Management Report for Quarter 2 of 2023/24. The reports related to the following functional areas which reported to the Board and detailed progress against service objectives and milestones and performance targets, and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period:

- Finance;
- Human Resources and Organisational Development;
- ICT and Administrative Support;
- Legal and Democracy;
- Catering, Stadium and Registration Services; and
- Property Services.

It was noted that apprenticeship opportunities were being explored and thanks were expressed to the ongoing work of ICT services and the services provided at the Stadium.

RESOLVED: That the Quarter 2 Performance Management report be noted.

*Meeting ended at 8.25 p.m.*

**AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Audit and Governance Board held on Wednesday, 22 November 2023 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Polhill (Chair), Wall (Vice-Chair), Abbott, Begg, Bevan, J. Bradshaw, Dourley, Gilligan, McDermott, N. Plumpton Walsh and Wallace

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: E. Dawson, M. Murphy and G. Ferguson

Also in attendance: S. Nixon - Grant Thornton UK LLP

**ITEMS DEALT WITH  
UNDER DUTIES  
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

*Action*

**AGB15 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

**AGB16 2022/23 EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE**

The Board received a progress update from Grant Thornton UK LLP, the Council's external auditor, regarding their audit of the Council's 2022/23 year-end accounts.

It was anticipated that once the audit was completed, the Auditor's findings would be reported to the next meeting of the Board, alongside the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts prior to their publication.

RESOLVED: That the verbal progress update by the Council's external auditor Grant Thornton UK LLP be received.

**AGB17 PROCUREMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which provided an update on:

- procurement activity in 2022/23, with an outline of

the key actions taken during the year – Members were referred to Appendix A, which presented a total of 167 contracts awarded with their values;

- the progress achieved in delivering the Council's Procurement Strategy – Appendix B provided updates on progress against the planned actions and demonstrated strong progress against all four themes of the Strategy. The Strategy document had been reviewed and minor changes had been made where necessary to reflect changes in activity and terminology. It was proposed that the refreshed version of the Strategy would be extended to cover the period until 2025. Following the update of the Council's Corporate Plan, the Strategy would be fully updated; and
- the Procurement Bill – received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023, officially making the Bill into an Act of Parliament. Secondary legislation would be presented to Parliament in early 2024, and it was anticipated that the new regulations would come into effect from October 2024. The report outlined some of the key points within Act.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the update on procurement activity and progress against the Procurement Strategy action plan be noted; and
- 2) the Board approves extending the existing Procurement Strategy until 2025 pending the completion of the update of the Corporate Plan and implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.

AGB18 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 items of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A 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 the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A 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.

#### AGB19 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Board received a report from the Divisional Manager – Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance, updating them on the internal audit activity since the last progress report to the Board on 27 September 2023. It also highlighted any matters that were relevant to the Board's responsibilities as the Council's Audit Committee.

Members were referred to Appendix One, which listed all the planned work for the year and its current status. The schedule of audits had been updated to reflect the progress made in completing audits since the last update to the Board. By the end of October 2023, 741 days of audit work had been completed, which represented 60% of the total planned days for the year. As reported previously, due to the new starters in the team requiring additional support with their work, it would be necessary for some planned work to be deferred to 2024/25.

Appended to the report were the executive summaries of the reports issued numbering 2 to 14, as listed in the report.

A Member commented on the Government's Autumn Statement and the requirement for local authorities to process planning applications within a set timescale and the penalties for not doing so. It was agreed that a follow-up audit of the planning team could be considered in 6-9 months time.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit Progress Report and comments made be noted.

Operational  
Director - Finance

*Meeting ended at 6.55 p.m.*

**DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

*At a meeting of the Development Management Committee on Monday, 2 October 2023 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors S. Hill (Chair), Leck (Vice-Chair), Bevan, Davidson, C. Loftus, Philbin, Polhill, Thompson and Woolfall

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Carlin and C. Plumpton Walsh

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Jones, T. Gibbs, A. Plant, L. Wilson-Lagan, I. Dignall and L. Crampton

Also in attendance: Councillor Ball and one member of the press

**ITEMS DEALT WITH  
UNDER DUTIES  
EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE**

DEV22 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2023, having been circulated, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

DEV23 PLANNING APPLICATIONS TO BE DETERMINED BY THE COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the following applications for planning permission and, in accordance with its powers and duties, made the decisions described below.

DEV24 23/00234/FUL - PROPOSED RE FENESTRATION OF EXISTING FACADE TO MAIN COLLEGE BUILDING AND NEW FOUR STOREY BUILDING HOUSING ENGINEERING WORKSHOPS AND CLASSROOMS, PLUS NEW SUBSTATION AND SWITCH ROOM TO WEST OF THE SITE AT RIVERSIDE COLLEGE, KINGSWAY, WIDNES

The consultation procedure undertaken was outlined in the report together with background information in respect of the site.

*Action*

The application was placed in List A of the published AB Update List. It was noted that there were no outstanding objections from consultees and no objections from Ward Councillors.

The Committee agreed that the application be approved.

RESOLVED: That the application be approved subject to conditions relating to the following:

1. Standard time limits condition;
2. Plans condition listing approved drawings (GR1);
3. External facing materials (GR1);
4. Site Waste Management Plan (WM8);
5. Post clearance investigation, assessment and if required, remediation (HE8);
6. Asbestos management plan (HE8);
7. Construction Environmental Management Plan (HE1, HE9);
8. Travel plan (CS(R)15);
9. Parking and servicing provision (C1 and C2);
10. Sustainable development and climate change scheme (CS(R)19);
11. SuDS including implementation, maintenance and management of a SuDS scheme in accordance with details to be submitted and verification report (HE9);
12. Details of disabled and EV spaces (C2);
13. Structural details of all retaining walls within 4m of the highway (C1); and
14. Boundary treatment details (GR1).

DEV25 23/00236/FUL - PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF EXISTING CHANGING ROOMS AND CONSTRUCTION OF TWO STOREY EXTENSION WITHIN THE FOOTPRINT OF THE MAIN COLLEGE BUILDING TO PROVIDE A NEW MUSIC HUB WITH MUSIC PRACTICE ROOMS, BAND ROOMS AND TWO CLASSROOMS. CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW BUILD TEACHING BLOCK PROVIDING 3 ICT CLASSROOMS, LABORATORY AND 6 CLASSROOMS, WITH STAFF AND SANITARY FACILITIES. ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING AND COVERED WALKWAY AT RIVERSIDE COLLEGE, CRONTON LANE, WIDNES

The consultation procedure undertaken was outlined in the report together with background information in respect of the site.

Officers advised of representations made by Ward Councillors on behalf of their constituents in relation to

highways and parking. Following meetings with Planning and Highways, the College agreed to some innovative updates which would be secured by condition, relating to permits, penalties, free bus passes and an automatic barrier system.

The Committee was addressed by Councillor Ball, a local Birchfield Ward Councillor, who spoke on behalf of local residents. She commented that local residents had already suffered disruption from recent construction at the site and they did not want a repeat of this. She had received daily complaints from residents during this time relating to parking issues in the surrounding area, some of which included Police involvement. She said that residents did not object in principle to the College making improvements and recognised that they provided good educational opportunities for the young people of Halton. She outlined some concerns residents made during the consultation period as follows:

- The construction period should not impede existing parking like it did previously;
- The College's Travel Plan needs updating;
- The Traffic Plan should include student travel monitoring methods;
- The time taken to exit the existing car park was unacceptable; a 'left turn only' enforcement was needed;
- Can the College consider staggering the finish times of lessons to help with the volume of students exiting the site at the same time;
- Traffic and highways impacts on surrounding areas should be considered;
- If student numbers increased in the future, so will the traffic problems; and
- Parking in residential streets.

Members recognised the existing traffic and highways issues raised by Councillor Ball as these were well documented. They also supported the College with its proposal to enhance its educational establishment and provide a better environment for students in the Borough. The Committee discussed possible options to alleviate issues relating to traffic disruption and congestion and one Member proposed a deferral until such time as the Travel Plan was submitted.

Officers advised that the College had cooperated fully with the Council and took the matters raised seriously. They were developing a Travel Plan which would be ready by

2024 and would include: monitoring of where students travelled from; disability parking facilities; electric vehicle charging points; free bus pass system and provision of cycling facilities. It was felt that a deferral was not needed.

In response to comments made, Officers suggested that the requirement for a Construction Management Plan could be added to the list of conditions, which would control the construction phase. Also, an updated Travel Plan could be requested prior to commencement on site, with a further update requested in 2024, prior to occupation of the site. The Committee agreed that these amendments would provide some reassurance for residents and Ward Councillors and were preferable to a deferral.

The suggested amendments to the conditions were moved and seconded and the Committee voted to approve the application, subject to the addition of these.

RESOLVED: That the application be approved subject to the following conditions, which include the inclusion of the additional two conditions mentioned above:

1. Standard time limits condition;
2. Plans condition listing approved drawings (GR1);
3. External facing materials (GR1);
4. Hours of construction (GR2);
5. Electric vehicle charging point scheme (CS(R)19);
6. Travel Plan prior to commencement of development (CS(R)15);
7. Parking and servicing provision (C1 and C2);
8. Sustainable development and climate change scheme (CS(R)19);
9. SuDS including implementation, maintenance and management of a SuDS scheme in accordance with details to be submitted and verification report (HE9);
10. Details of disabled and EV spaces (C2);
11. Boundary treatment details (GR1); and
12. Construction Management Plan.

#### DEV26 MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

It was noted that the following appeal had been received / was in progress:

#### **22/00019/PLD**

Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for a proposed use of development for the installation of a solar farm (ground mounted solar photovoltaic panels) at

Liverpool John Lennon Airport, on land bounded by  
Dungeon Lane, Hale Road and Baileys Lane, to the east of  
Liverpool John Lennon Airport, Speke, Liverpool, L24 1YD.

*Meeting ended at 7.10 p.m.*

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**APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE**

*At a meeting of the Appointments Committee held on Tuesday, 3 October 2023 at the Karalius Suite - Halton Stadium, Widnes*

Present: Councillors J. Bradshaw, Dennett, McDermott, Ratcliffe and Thompson

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Wharton

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: S. Young, W. Rourke, G. Haining and H. Hamlett

Also present: K. Collier and R Malpass – North West Employers

**ITEMS DEALT WITH  
UNDER DUTIES  
EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE**

	<i>Action</i>
<p>APC4 MINUTES</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2023, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and agreed as a correct record.</p>	
<p>APC5 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985</p> <p>The Board considered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) whether members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A 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</li> <li>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</li> </ol>	

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 the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A 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.

APC6 APPOINTMENT OF POST - OPERATIONAL DIRECTOR  
ECONOMY, ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY

RESOLVED: That

- 1) two candidates were appointable; Damian Cooke and Sally McDonald and
- 2) Damian Cooke be appointed to the post of Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property.

Chief Executive

*Meeting ended at 2.07 p.m.*