

# Public Document Pack



## Executive Board

Thursday, 20 April 2023 2.00 p.m.  
Boardroom - Municipal Building, Widnes

S. Young

Chief Executive

### ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

#### PART 1

| Item   | Page No        |
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| <b>1. MINUTES</b>  | <b>1 - 10</b>  |
| <b>2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST</b>  |                |
| Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item. |                |
| <b>3. LEADER'S PORTFOLIO</b>   |                |
| <b>(A) HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND NO.4 2023/24</b>   | <b>11 - 15</b> |

*Please contact Gill Ferguson 0151 511 8059 or  
gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk for further information.  
The next meeting of the Committee is on Tuesday, 16 May 2023*

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| (B) DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF  | 16 - 19   |
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*In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.*

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 16 March 2023 in Boardroom -  
Municipal Building, Widnes*

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

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: S. Young, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, S. Wallace-Bonner and  
A. Jones

Also in attendance: None

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

*Action*

EXB86 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2023  
were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

**LEADER'S PORTFOLIO**

EXB87 PENSIONS DISCRETIONS STATEMENT 2023/24

The Board received the annual Pensions Discretions  
Statement for 2023-24 for Halton Borough Council.

The Council was required to publish a Pension  
Discretion Statement annually, to advise the discretions it  
intended to exercise under the Local Government Pension  
Scheme (LGPS) – this was appended to the report.

It was reported that the Pensions Discretion  
Statement for 2023-24 was based upon the statement for  
2022-23, which was approved by Executive Board in  
February 2022. It was noted that no new discretions had  
been added.

RESOLVED: That the Board approve the Pensions  
Discretions Statement for 2023-24.

EXB88 THE CORPORATE PLAN: INTERIM APPROACH AND THE WAY FORWARD

The Board considered a report which outlined the approach to producing an interim Corporate Plan for the Council. In order to progress the initial work, North West Employers had facilitated and supported a session with members of the Board and Management Team on 6 December 2022. Following the session, it was agreed that an interim Plan with a Statement of Intent would be in place by March 2024 and a Corporate Plan would be produced from April 2024. The report set out the key themes for Halton, timeline and engagement with the public (the 'Big Conversation').

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) agree on the interim approach outlined and the way forward culminating in a new Council Corporate Plan being launched on 1 April 2024;
- 2) the report be noted;
- 3) approves the Statement of Intent for publication on 1 April 2023; and
- 4) endorses the approach to facilitate the 'Big Conversation'.

Operational  
Director Policy,  
People,  
Performance and  
Efficiency

EXB89 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board considered 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.

The report outlined details of the applications from Widnes Gymnastics Academy and Runcorn Amateur Boxing Club in respect of their premises and the potential annual cost to the Council of granting discretionary rate relief to each organisation.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the application for 15% discretionary rate relief from Widnes Gymnastics Academy with effect from 14 July 2022, be approved; and
- 2) the application for 90% discretionary rate relief from Runcorn Amateur Boxing Club with effect from 1 June

Operational  
Director - Finance



2022, be approved.

**EXB90 REVIEW OF COUNCIL WIDE FEES AND CHARGES**

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, on the review of the Council wide fees and charges for 2023/24 for services provided by the Council's Directorates.

The Board was advised that, as part of the budget preparations for 2023/24, a review of fees and charges had been carried out. The aim in setting fees and charges was to ensure that the Council fully recovered the cost incurred in providing the service, although this was dependent on a number of factors outside of the agreed charge. These were detailed in the report and noted as including demand, which could change year on year and be affected by weather, economy, regional and national events and demographics; competition, where there may be a strong competitive market; and a statutory element, where some charges were outside the control of the Council and there was no discretion to what could be charged.

Attached at Appendix A was the proposed schedule of statutory fees for 2023/24 and the chargeable rates for The Brindley Theatre and the Registrar's Service were attached at Appendix B and C respectively, for 2023/24.

RESOLVED: That the proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix A attached to the report and for 2023/24 as set out in Appendices B and C attached to the report, be approved.

Operational  
Director - Finance

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO**

**EXB91 HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL AND NHS CHESHIRE & MERSEYSIDE: JOINT WORKING AGREEMENT (BETTER CARE (POOLED) FUND)**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adult Services, which presented for approval the Joint Working Agreement (JWA) between the Council and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside (CM), which would take effect from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The Agreement would replace the current JWA which was due to expire on 31 March 2023, the draft Agreement was attached as Appendix 1.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the contents of the report and associated Appendix; and
- 2) approve the Agreement, with delegated authority to the Executive Director Adult Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, to finalise the new Joint Working Agreement.

Executive Director  
of Adult Services

#### EXB92 HOMELESSNESS GRANT FUNDING ALLOCATION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adults, which described the various grants that had been issued by Central Government to support rough sleepers and people who were, or were likely to become, homeless. It also made proposals for the allocation of these grants.

Government confirmed the allocation of a key element of the overall investment in funding through the Homelessness Prevention Grant, which was available to local authorities in 2023-24 to support and deliver services to prevent and tackle homelessness. Members were advised that from this funding Halton had been allocated £369,085 for 2023/24. It was noted that the funding grant allocation would be ring fenced to ensure the Local Authority had the resources to take action to prevent homelessness and utilise the funding to continue to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The proposals for the allocation of the Homelessness Prevention Grant were presented in Appendix 1, Repossession Notice Activity in Appendix 2 and the proposals for the allocation of the Rough Sleepers Initiative Grant were presented in Appendix 3.

RESOLVED: That Executive Board

- 1) note and consider the contents of this report; and
- 2) approve the recommendations for expenditure against the grants, as described in Appendices 1 and 3.

Executive Director  
of Adult Services

#### HEALTH AND WELLBEING PORTFOLIO

#### EXB93 NHS HEALTH CHECK PROGRAM

The Board considered a report of the Director of Public Health, which sought approval by virtue of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (v), to waive part 3.1

and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders to renew current public health services provided by GP Practices, specifically the NHS Health Check Program (NHSHC), for a three year period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026, with the potential to be extended on an annual basis for a further two years until 31 March 2028.

The award of the contract via a waiver was sought on the following basis:

- The NHSHC is a clinical service that can only be delivered by organisations that satisfied the requisite clinical and regulatory requirement;
- Only General Practices holding a contract with the NHS for provision of healthcare were entitled to keep, maintain and access a registered patient list. Access to confidential patient data contained within this list, was essential to fulfil obligations to deliver the NHSHC program; and
- It would prevent disruption to the delivery of important and mandated services.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) the contents of the report be noted; and
- 2) give approval to the recommendation that the contract with GP Practices be extended for a further three year period, with the potential for two one year extensions, without going through the Procurement process, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4(v) (non-emergency procedures – exceeding a value threshold of £100,000) seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders.

Director of Public Health

## **ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL & CLIMATE CHANGE PORTFOLIOS**

### **EXB94 ZERO WASTE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK**

The Board received a report of the Operational Director – Community and Greenspace, which provided details on the progress in developing a Liverpool City Region Zero Waste Strategic Framework in co-ordination with partner Liverpool City Region (LCR) local authorities. The report sought approval to adopt the key principles set out in the LCR Zero Waste 2040 Strategic Framework, to minimise waste related carbon emissions through actions to prevent, reduce, recycle and re-use waste. A copy of the

Strategic Framework document was attached as Appendix 1.

The Strategy would provide the strategic link between the partnership work being undertaken across the LCR to tackle waste and also the collective commitment to achieve the Halton's net zero ambitions.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) approve the principles set out in the LCR Zero Waste 2040 Strategic Framework (attached as Appendix 1) to reduce waste related carbon emissions; and
- 2) approve continued partnership working with Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority (MRWA) and the other LCR local authorities to deliver action to meet our individual and collective climate targets and objectives.

Operational Director -  
Community &  
Green Space

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

EXB95 VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING – GRANT ALLOCATIONS 2023/24

The Board received a report of the Executive Director – Adult Services, which presented the Voluntary Sector Funding Grant allocations for 2023/24.

Halton Borough Council had been awarding direct grants to local voluntary and charitable organisations for a number of years. The opportunity to receive a grant was advertised on the Council website and applications were invited. Applications were then assessed against key criteria, as set out in the report. Recommendations were agreed by a panel consisting of the Executive Board Member with Portfolio responsibility for the Voluntary Sector and Officers.

Following the panel's assessment, the recommendations for allocations were presented in paragraph 3.3, from an available budget of £226,640.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves the grant allocations as outlined in the report.

Executive Director of Adult Services

EXB96 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.

#### **DEPUTY LEADER'S PORTFOLIO**

#### **EXB97 FORMER BUS DEPOT MOOR LANE, WIDNES**

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director - Economy, Enterprise and Property, which provided an update on the negotiations regarding the Moor Lane Bus depot. The report sought approval to declare the asset surplus to requirements and to place the building on the Council's disposal list.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board approves the placing of the asset on the Council's Asset Disposal register;
- 2) approval is given to the Operational Director - Economy, Enterprise and Property, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Deputy Leader – Major

Operational  
Director -  
Economy,  
Enterprise &  
Property

Projects, to place the property on the open market for sale; and

- 3) authorises the Operational Director - Economy, Enterprise and Property, 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 Deputy Leader – Major Projects.

**EXB98 57-59 HIGH STREET, RUNCORN**

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Economy, Enterprise and Property, which sought approval for the construction of new assets and subsequent lease of 57-59 High Street, Runcorn. The site would be used for the new build of a youth centre on the plot of 57 High Street and the refurbishment/repurposing of 59 High Street as a winter garden as part of the youth centre. The plan also included an internet style cafe and a training kitchen with outside garden suitable for growing vegetables.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Board

- 1) approves the construction of new assets and subsequent lease of 57-59 on the terms reported in section 3.4; and
- 2) authorises the Operational Director – Economy, Enterprise and Property to arrange for all required documentation for the construction and lease to be completed to the satisfaction of the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Deputy Leader – Major Projects.

Operational Director - Economy, Enterprise & Property

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO**

**EXB99 LILYCROSS CARE CENTRE - CARE BEDS**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adult Services, which sought a waiver of Procurement Standing Orders for the granting of an extension to the current contract for the provision of 10 Transitional Beds (Residential and Nursing) at Lilycross Care Centre, Widnes by Catalyst Management Services for the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the contents of the report; and
- 2) in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (v), a waiver of Part 3 of Procurement Standing Orders be approved for the granting of an extension to the current contract with Catalyst Management Services, for the provision of Care Beds at Lilycross Care Centre for the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023.

Executive Director  
of Adult Services

**EXB100 CARE PROVIDER CONTRACT UPLIFT 2023/24**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adult Services, which advised on the outcome of the consultation with domiciliary care, direct payments, supported living and care home providers within Halton, in respect of the Care Provider Contract Uplift for 2023/24.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board note the contents of the report;
- 2) the Board considers the recommendations and risks; and
- 3) approval to be given to offer the recommended uplift to care providers for 2023/24.

Executive Director  
of Adult Services

**ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO**

**EXB101 FOUNDRY LANE RESIDENTIAL**

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director - Economy, Enterprise and Property, which provided an update on the Foundry Lane Residential Scheme and requested additional funding to meet the liabilities from the land transfer agreement and bridge the funding gap left by pre-Grant Funding Agreement expenditure.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board recommends to Full Council that funding is sought for the additional costs to be funded through an amendment to the Capital Programme to ensure that the Foundry Lane Residential Scheme is delivered.

Operational  
Director -  
Economy,  
Enterprise &  
Property

EXB102 SCI-TECH DARESBUURY MASTERPLAN UPDATE

The Board received a report of the Operational Director - Economy, Enterprise and Property, which provided an update on the delivery of the Sci-Tech Daresbury Masterplan and land acquisition requirements.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Operational Director – Legal and Democratic Services, is authorised to commission preparatory work and finalise discussions as detailed in Paragraphs 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.

Operational  
Director, Legal  
and Democratic  
Services

**LEADER'S PORTFOLIO**

EXB103 CONTRACT FOR ADVOCACY SERVICE

The Board received a report of the Operational Director – Legal and Democratic Services, which sought a request to waive Procurement Standing Orders to allow the renewal of a contract with 7 Harrington Street Chambers to provide advocacy and legal services on behalf of the Council, for a period of one year from 1 April 2023 with an option to renew for a further 2 years thereafter. The report set out the anticipated cost of the contract and the risk to the Council should the contract renewal not be agreed.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board approve that the contract with 7 Harrington Street Chambers be renewed for twelve months, with an option to extend for a further 2 years, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (v) (non-emergency procedures – exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders.

Operational  
Director, Legal  
and Democratic  
Services

**MINUTES ISSUED: 21 March 2023**

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

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

*Meeting ended at 3.05 p.m.*



**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 20 April 2023

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Operational Director – Finance

**PORTFOLIO:** Leader

**SUBJECT:** Household Support Fund No.4 2023/24

**WARD(S):** Borough-wide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To seek approval for a proposed Scheme and Spending Plan, regarding how the £2.6m grant allocation for the 2023/24 Household Support Fund might be utilised.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDED That:**

- (i) The Scheme and Spending Plan for the 2023/24 Housing Support Fund, as outlined in the report and appendix, be approved;**
- (ii) Regular progress reports be presented to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board;**
- (iii) Any subsequent revisions to the Spending Plan be approved by the Operational Director, Finance in consultation with the Leader.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

#### **Household Support Fund No.4**

- 3.1 On 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023 the Government issued guidance and announced a grant allocation for Halton of £2.6m. This is to provide for the continuation of the Household Support Fund, for a further twelve months from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- 3.2 The Fund has operated since October 2021 in six-month tranches of £1.3m, however, this latest allocation covers a twelve month period. The Fund is intended to support vulnerable households with the pressures caused by the rapidly rising cost of living.
- 3.3 The Government have changed the requirements for this latest allocation, such that part of the funding must be distributed on the basis of an application process. However, the Council can still proactively target particular groups of vulnerable households.

### **Discretionary Support Scheme – Application Process**

- 3.4 In order to meet the requirement to operate part of the scheme on an application basis, it is proposed to allocate £356,000 of the funding to the Discretionary Support Scheme within the Benefits Division, which has an existing telephone application process.
- 3.5 The DWP guidance once again states that the Household Support Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low income households in need, including families with children, pensioners, and people with disabilities.

### **Free School Meal Vouchers**

- 3.6 In order to provide assistance to vulnerable households with children, it is proposed to once again allocate funding to low income families with children, by issuing free school meal vouchers of £12 per week during all of the school holidays. The Easter holidays 2023 will be provided for from the current Fund allocation.
- 3.7 It is estimated that the provision of free school meals vouchers will cost approximately £1,170,000 in total. This will provide approximately 7,500 children with free school meals throughout all of the school holidays over the coming twelve months.

### **Pensioner Households on Council Tax Reduction (CTR)**

- 3.8 To support vulnerable pensioner households, it is proposed that all pensioners currently receiving council tax reduction (CTR) will be provided with a one-off award of £120.
- 3.9 It is estimated that 4,181 pensioner households on CTR will benefit from this award, at a total cost of £501,720.

### **Public Health and Care Leavers**

- 3.10 It is proposed to allocate £100,000 to Public Health who will target support at vulnerable households who may fall outside those covered by the rest of the Spending Plan.
- 3.11 In addition, Public Health will also target support to families who have pre-school age children, and are flagged on the Income Deprivation Index affecting children. Families who have disabled pre-school age children will also be targeted for support. It is therefore proposed to allocate a further £84,000 to Public Health for this particular project.
- 3.12 Children's Services currently have 135 recent care leavers and up to 50 young people in care who will become 18 years old in the next twelve months. It is proposed to assist these two vulnerable groups

during the cost of living crisis with the following: energy bill support, household packs to assist with keeping warm, saving energy and cooking, and emergency food and hygiene packs. It is proposed to allocate £84,000 to Children's Services to provide the above mentioned support.

### **Voluntary Sector Partners**

- 3.13 It is once again proposed to ask Voluntary Sector Partners to assist the Council with the delivery of support to residents. The allocations made previously for six month periods, to Citizens Advice, Food Banks, Affordable Warmth etc. have been doubled for the coming year. Each organisation will provide a detailed proposal of how they intend to utilise the funding and throughout the year they will provide the Council with monitoring information for submission to the DWP.

### **Delivery Co-Ordination, Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements**

- 3.14 The Benefits Division will once again co-ordinate use of the grant on behalf of the Council. In order to maximise the benefit of the grant funding for the Borough and ensure it is fully utilised, discussions have been held with colleagues across the Council. A proposed Spending Plan has been prepared as set out in the Appendix, regarding how the grant funding might be utilised via a combination of Council Departments and the Voluntary Sector to deliver help and assistance to vulnerable households over the twelve month period.
- 3.15 The Spending Plan is intended to provide clarity of what actions are required of the relevant Council Departments and Partner Organisations, with lead officers being identified. It will also provide a basis for monitoring spending against the grant, with periodic submissions to the DWP and to ensure the funding is fully utilised in accordance with the grant guidance by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.
- 3.16 If the grant is not fully spent by 31 March 2024 and/or is not spent in accordance with the grant guidance, it will be clawed back by the DWP.
- 3.17 The Spending Plan must be submitted to the DWP by 17 May 2023. It is proposed that any subsequent revisions to the Plan are approved by the Operational Director, Finance in consultation with the Leader. Regular monitoring reports of spending and outcomes against the Plan, will be presented to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board during the year.

## **4.0 POLICY AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None.

**5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

**5.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

None.

**5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

None.

**5.3 A Healthy Halton**

None.

**5.4 A Safer Halton**

None.

**5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

The delivery of support from the Household Support Fund to the Borough's vulnerable households, has the potential to support all of the Council priorities.

**6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 If the grant allocation from the Household Support Fund, is not fully utilised in accordance with the DWP guidance by the deadline date of 31 March 2024, any remaining grant funding will be clawed back by the DWP. The Spending Plan presented in the Appendix is intended to ensure that the grant funding is fully utilised by the deadline and in accordance with the grant guidance.

**7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 None.

**8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no implications.

**9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

| <b>Document</b>                                 | <b>Place of Inspection</b> | <b>Contact Officer</b>                         |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| Household Support Fund Allocations and Guidance | DCLB Stadium               | Paul Garnett<br>Divisional Manager<br>Benefits |

## APPENDIX1

**Household Support Fund  
Spending Plan 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

|   | £  |
|---|--|
| Total grant allocation  | 2,595,761  |
| Less administration costs (5%)  | 129,788  |
| <b>Available grant funding</b>  | <b>2,465,973</b>   |
| <p><b>1. Vulnerable Households with Children</b><br/>Free school meal vouchers for school holidays:<br/>Summer half term 29<sup>th</sup> May 2023 – 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023 (1 week)<br/>Summer holidays 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023 – 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023 (6 weeks)<br/>Autumn half term 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov 2023 (1 week)<br/>Christmas holidays 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 2023 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan 2024 (2 weeks)<br/>Spring half term 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> February 2024 (1 week)<br/>Easter holidays 29<sup>th</sup> March 2024 – 12<sup>th</sup> April 2024 (2 weeks)</p> <p>Based on an estimated 7,500 children entitled to FSM, paid for 13 weeks with a £12 voucher per week</p> | 1,170,000  |
| <p><b>2. Vulnerable Pensioner Households</b><br/>Based on 4,181 pensioner households receiving CTR/HB<br/>Suggested award £120 per pensioner</p>  | 501,720  |
| <p><b>3. Discretionary Support Scheme</b><br/>Delivered upon application. Based on HSF3 allocation for 6 months of £178,000.</p>  | 356,000  |
| <p><b>4. Public Health</b><br/>Awards to vulnerable residents who do not qualify under any other categories, to include; prescription charges, electrical medical equipment costs, targeted healthy eating sessions, bus passes to get to work for those who do not qualify for benefits, and budgeting workshops.</p>  | 100,000  |
| <p><b>5. Public Health</b><br/>To make awards to families who have pre-school age children who are flagged on the Income Deprivation Index affecting children. In addition families who have pre-school age children who are disabled will be supported.</p>  | 84,126   |
| <p><b>6. Care Leavers</b><br/>Cost of living awards for recent care leavers and to those young people who will become care leavers in the next 12 months.</p>   | 84,127   |
| <p><b>7. Other vulnerable households – HSF3 amount doubled</b><br/>Halton Citizens Advice Bureau<br/>Widnes Food Bank<br/>Runcorn Food Bank<br/>Holiday Activity Food programme<br/>Affordable Warmth – Energy Projects Plus<br/>Halton Voluntary Action</p>  | 80,000<br>20,000<br>20,000<br>10,000<br>20,000<br>20,000 |

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>REPORT TO:</b>         | Executive Board                        |
| <b>DATE:</b>              | 20 April 2023                          |
| <b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b> | Operational Director, Finance          |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>           | Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief |
| <b>PORTFOLIO:</b>         | Leader                                 |
| <b>WARD(S):</b>           | Borough-wide                           |

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider an application for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the application for discretionary rate relief for SHAP Limited be approved at 15% with effect from 11<sup>th</sup> January 2023.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Under the amended provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council is 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.

3.2 From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 the Council became responsible for meeting the full cost of all mandatory and discretionary relief granted, as part of the Liverpool City Region 100% Business Rates Retention Pilot Scheme.

3.3 An application for discretionary rate relief has been received from Shap Limited as outlined below.

3.4 Currently, where discretionary rate relief has been granted to registered charities and non-profit organisations, it has been provided until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 in order to provide the organisations with some degree of certainty.

### **Shap Limited**

**1 Ann Street West, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 7UB**

3.5 Shap Limited is a registered charity and voluntary agency working with homeless and vulnerable people, offering them accommodation and support services.

- 3.6 The services cover a wide range of accommodation, with different levels and intensities of support.
- 3.7 The core function of the service provided within Halton from 1 Ann Street West, Widnes is to provide Domestic Abuse Supported Accommodation (Refuge), providing a service for victims of domestic abuse and their families to create a supportive environment that provides protection from abuse and empowers those impacted by domestic violence.
- 3.8 As a registered charity the organisation qualifies for 80% mandatory rate relief. Shap Limited has now applied for 15% discretionary rate relief.
- 3.9 Shap Limited also occupies 35 Queens Avenue, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 8HR which are used as offices and already receives 80% mandatory relief in respect of those premises as a registered charity.
- 3.10 The cost in 2022/23 of providing relief for the Ann Street West premises from 11 January 2023 to 31 March 23 will be as follows;

|                               |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 80% mandatory relief          | £3,142.14        |
| 15% discretionary relief from | <u>£589.15</u>   |
| Total cost to HBC             | <u>£3,731.29</u> |

- 3.11 The full year cost from 2023/24 will be as follows:

|                          |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 80% mandatory relief     | £15,052.80        |
| 15% discretionary relief | <u>£2,822.40</u>  |
| Total cost to HBC        | <u>£17,875.20</u> |

- 3.12 The full breakdown of the costs are as presented in the Appendix.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Board is required by the regulations to consider each application on its own merit. Any recommendations provided are given for guidance only, are consistent with Council policy and, wherever possible, previous decisions.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Appendix presents the potential costs to the Council of granting rate relief for the part 2022/23 financial year and the full 2023/24 financial year.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

Shap Limited provides accommodation victims of domestic abuse and their families.

**6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

None.

**6.3 A Healthy Halton**

None.

**6.4 A Safer Halton**

None.

**6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

**7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There are no key risks associated with the proposed action.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The applicants offer their services to all sections of the community, without any prejudice.

**9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

| <b>9.1</b> | <b>Document</b>  | <b>Place of Inspection</b>                     | <b>Contact Officer</b>                                    |
|------------|------------------|--|---|
|            | Application form | Halton Stadium,<br>Lower House Lane,<br>Widnes | Adel Tomkins<br>Senior Rating Officer<br>– Business Rates |



**APPENDIX**

| <b>Ratepayer</b> | <b>Address</b>                               | <b>Annual Rates Liability 2023/24</b> | <b>Mandatory Rate Relief Awarded</b> | <b>Annual Cost of Mandatory Rate Relief to HBC 2023/24</b> | <b>Disc. Rate Relief</b> | <b>Annual Cost of Disc. Rate Relief to HBC 2023/24</b> | <b>Actual Rates Liability 2022/23 from 11.01.23-31.03.23</b> | <b>Actual Cost of Mandatory Relief to HBC from 11.01.23-31.03.23</b> | <b>Actual Cost of Disc. Rate Relief to HBC from 11.01.23-31.03.23</b> |
|------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|--|--|--|---|
|                  |  | £                                     | £                                    | £  |                          | £  | £  | £  | £   |
| Shap Ltd         | 1 Ann Street West, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 7UB | £18,816.00                            | 80%                                  | £15,052.80   | 15%                      | £2,822.40  | £3,927.67  | £3,142.14  | £589.15   |

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>REPORT TO:</b>         | Executive Board                                      |
| <b>DATE:</b>              | 20 April 2023  |
| <b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b> | Operational Director – Legal and Democratic Services |
| <b>PORTFOLIO:</b>         | Leader's   |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>           | Annual Review of Constitution 2023                   |
| <b>WARDS:</b>             | Borough-wide   |

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to ask the Board to seek the approval of the Council to a small number of changes to the Constitution.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board recommends Council to approve the changes to the Constitution including the matters set out in Appendix 1.**

### **3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The revised version of the Constitution picks up the changes to the Council's working arrangements that have taken place during the year, as well as other changes which are intended to assist the Council to operate more effectively.
- 3.2 The proposals for change have been considered by the Chief Executive and the Leader in accordance with Article 16.02. Apart from the purely technical changes, the proposed amendments that are considered to be of particular significance are listed in Appendix A to this report.

### **4.0 POLICY, FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 All legislative changes have been considered. However, no further amendments, over and above those already outlined, are required at the present time. Any other required changes during the period 2023/24 will be the subject of further reports when dates and details are available.

### **5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

- 5.1 **Children and Young People in Halton.**
- 5.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton.**
- 5.3 **A Healthy Halton.**

**5.4 A Safer Halton.**

**5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal.**

The changes proposed are designed to support the continued delivery of the Council's priorities.

**6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 The Council needs to ensure that its Constitution is regularly updated so that it continues to support efficient, transparent and accountable decision-making by the authority.

**7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 None.

**8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no implications.

**9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.

**Proposed Significant Changes to the Constitution**

**Amended version of Procurement Standing Orders – See Attachment.**

**Standing Order Relating to Duties of Proper Officers and Delegation to Officers: A number of consequential amendments following changes to the Management Structure.**

**2023-24 PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDER (PSO) AMENDMENTS**

| PSO               | Title                        | Changes   | Text   |
|-------------------|------------------------------|---|--|
| Glossary of Terms | Agent                        | Delete title and text   | A person who has the authority to act on behalf of another and consents so to act  |
| Contents 1.4.3    | Collaborative Arrangements   | Delete 1.4.3 text   | Contracts where the Council acts as Agent  |
| 1.3.3             | Grant Funding                | Correct spelling Grand to Grant.                              | Irrespective of value, Contracts and Framework Agreements that are subject to grant funding requirements shall be procured in accordance with the Grant  |
| 1.3.4             | Procurement Risk Assessment  | Insert new text - Equal to or                                 | The relevant officer shall consult with the Divisional Manager – Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance (or nominated officer) regarding the need to complete a PRA for all procurement activity equal to or exceeding £25,000 in value.   |
| 1.3.5             | Preliminary Estimates Report | Insert new text - Equal to or                                 | <b>1. Preliminary Estimate Report – Contracts equal to or exceeding £1,000,000 in Value</b><br>Before starting a tendering procedure for a contract equal to or exceeding £1,000,000 in value the Executive Board  |
| 1.3.7             | Council Contracts            | Include ref. to PSO 1.14.5                                    | <b>Council Contracts</b><br>The relevant officer shall ascertain whether there is an existing Council contract before seeking to procure any works, services or supplies. Where such a contract exists, the officer may not enter into a separate contract except with the prior written approval of the Divisional Manager – Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance in accordance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.5. |
| 1.4.1             | Frameworks                   | Replace CBD with CPB  | <b>Framework Agreements</b><br>Where a Call-off is proposed under an existing Framework Agreement that has been established by a Central Purchasing Body (CPB)   |
| 1.4.1 (v)         | Frameworks                   | Replace 1.3.4 with 1.3.5 and Insert new text - be Equal to or | Procurement Standing Order 1.3.5[AM1] in respect of preliminary estimate reports, where the  |

|            |  |  |   |
|------------|--|--|---|
|            |  |  | contract value is forecast to be equal to or exceeding £1,000,000 over its duration.  |
| 1.4.1 (vi) | Frameworks                                   | Replace text greater than with exceeding   | The relevant Operational Director shall ensure that 'call-offs' with a value equal to or exceeding £25,000 are published on Contract Finder in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.2.5.  |
| 1.4.3      | Contracts where the Council acts as an Agent | Delete 1.4.3 title and text  | <b>Contracts where the Council acts as Agent</b><br>Where the Council acts as the Agent for any other local authority or public body or company these Standing Orders shall apply unless the principal in question instructs otherwise in writing   |
| 1.5.7      | Dynamic Purchasing System                    | Insert new point 1.5.7   | Call-off under a DPS does not remove the requirement to comply with the following Procurement Standing Orders:<br><br>Procurement Standing Order 1.3.5 in respect of preliminary estimate reports, where the contract value is forecast to exceed £1,000,000 over its duration<br><br>Procurement Standing Order 1.9 regarding the acceptance of tenders. |
| 1.6.1      | EPS  | Replace text greater than with exceeding   | <b>Electronic Procurement System (EPS)</b><br>All Invitations to Tender (ITT) and Request for Quotations (RFQ) equal to or exceeding £25,000 will be issued and received electronically using the Council's approved EPS. Tenders submitted by any other means shall not be considered.   |
| 1.8.3(iv)  | Evaluation Matrix                            | Insert new text - with dated signatures from all of the evaluators   | All scores and notes made by the evaluation panel must be recorded in writing, with dated signatures from all of the evaluators and used for reference in the event that further moderation is required.  |
| 1.8.4 (i)  | Moderation                                   | Insert new text - All notes must be recorded in writing with dated signatures from all of the evaluators and | The evaluation panel will discuss their individual scores with a view to reaching agreement on a moderated score and justifying comments, in consultation the Divisional Manager – Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance or nominated officer. All notes must be recorded in writing with  |

|           |                                    |  |  |
|-----------|------------------------------------|--|--|
|           |                                    | moderating office                              | dated signatures from all of the evaluators and moderating officer.  |
| 1.14.5(v) | Waiver Supplementary               | Replace text - 1.3.6 with 1.3.7                | In cases where the waiver request is to seek approval to use an alternative supplier to the one contracted by an existing Council contract, this must be in accordance with Procurement Standing Order 1.3.7.                  |
| Part 2    | Title                              | Replace text - greater than with exceeding     | PART 2: STANDING ORDERS FOR CONTRACTS EQUAL TO OR EXCEEDING THE PUBLIC CONTRACT REGULATIONS (PCR) 2015 VALUE THRESHOLDS INCLUSIVE OF VAT   |
| 2.1       | Application                        | Replace text - greater than with exceeding     | Part 2 of these Standing Orders shall apply to all contracts equal to or exceeding the PCR 2015 Works, Services or Supplies Value Threshold inclusive of VAT   |
| 2.4       | Contracts equal to                 | Replace text - greater than with exceeding     | Contracts equal to or exceeding the PCR 2015 Works Value Threshold   |
| 3.2       | Title                              | Replace text - greater than with exceeding     | Value equal to or exceeding £25,000  |
| 3.3       | Title                              | Insert new text - Exclusive of VAT             | <b>Value less than £25,000 – exclusive of VAT</b>  |
| 3.3 (i)   | Value less than £25,000            | Delete existing text and replace with new text | (i) <b>Appropriate documentary evidence is retained as evidence to show how the award provides best value for the Council.</b>   |
| 3.4       | Aggregation of Low Value Purchases | Insert new text - Equal to or                  | Officers must determine the actual value of expenditure in line with regular recurring purchases of the same nature. Any aggregated value that is equal to or exceeds £25,000 must comply with Procurement Standing Order 3.2. |
|           | Compliant Procurement Routes       | Replace existing table with amended V7         | Compliant Procurement Routes – V7 attached   |

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 20 April 2023

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director, Children's Services

**PORTFOLIO:** Children and Young People

**SUBJECT:** Services for Early Help, Employment, Debt and Benefits Advice Service: Request for Waiver of Standing Orders

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

### 1.1 Request for Waiver of Standing Orders:

A request for a waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (iv) of part 3 of Procurement Standing Orders is sought for the direct award to support the introduction of a contract with Halton Citizen Advice Bureau to deliver, on behalf of the Council, the provision of Early Help, Employment, Debt and Benefits Advice Service for a period of two years from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board

- i) note the contents of this report; and
- ii) in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (iv), Executive Board approve a Waiver of Part 3 of Procurement Standing Orders, for a direct award of a Contract for Early Help, Employment, Debt and Benefits Advice Service to be delivered by Halton Citizen Advice Bureau for a period of two years from 1st June 2023 to 31st May 2025.

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 It is widely reported that the UK is in a cost-of-living crisis. Fuel costs and the cost of heating a home have increased significantly and risen again throughout 2022/ 23. Economic inflation is driving an increase in the cost of household items including food, clothing, winter coats and blankets; this, combined with the changes to the welfare system, and rising prices in the shops due to inflation may leave many households struggling to make ends meet.
- 3.2 Across the generations its further impacts may include increasing levels of social isolation, worsening mental health, increasing levels



of digital poverty, increasing demand on foodbanks, as well as increasing demand on council services and community, voluntary and faith organisations.

- 3.3 The Office of National Statistics (ONS) conducts regular national surveys that have identified a worsening picture of debt, limited spending and lifestyle changes linked to price increases. Those living in the poorest families are making the deepest cuts.
- 3.4 A total of 38,750 Halton people live in the 10% most deprived area nationally: This is almost a third of all residents (30.4%) and the proportion living in the most deprived 20% nationally is almost half of all people (48.4 %.)
- 3.5 The main groups of people who are also predicted to be more at risk from the impacts include people living with a disability (15,770 households with one person with a long-term health problem or disability in Halton: 2011 Census); Children In Halton, 16.6% of children aged under 16 live in relative low income households; this equates to approximately 24,600 children. (Marmot report) and people living in households that meet the definition for fuel poverty (an estimated 7900 homes in total.)
- 3.6 For Halton there has been over a 25% increase during 2022 for debt advice and with an increase in single parents needing access to support.
- 3.7 A key part of the Supporting Families Programme is to drive improvements to local partnership working and data use so that vulnerable families receive the right support, at the right time. There are 10 key outcomes as part of the framework that looks to identify and support the most vulnerable children and families contained within the outcome framework is element around financial stability. The LA must show clear evidence with regard to successful outcomes in order to draw down funding via payment by results. This service will directly support and provide evidence with regard to this outcome and will support the whole family working approach which will aid more families achieving successful outcomes.
- 3.8 The council has also received Family Hub funding over £ 2million over the next 3 years. The Family Hub model is to provide families with a single access point to integrated family support service for early help with social, emotional, physical and financial needs.
- 3.9 A dedicated service provision around employment, debt and benefit advice would enable Halton to deliver on the requirements of the above programmes with the ability for us to support the most vulnerable children and families with a service they can access more readily through the family hub model.

- 3.10 The value of the contract will be £200,000 for two years and will be supported by the Supporting Families and Family Hub programmes.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The method of procurement complies with both Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council's Procurement Standing Orders.
- 4.2 The stability of the service will support all aspects of Early Help with a focus upon some of the most vulnerable children, young people and families across the borough

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The funding for the waiver is within current budgets.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The delivery of the service supports Halton's focus upon Early Help and the priorities within Halton's Children and Young People's Plan

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The provider will ensure that young people and families are supported in their learning and future employment and skills development.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The service will support people to access relevant services to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

The service provides support to vulnerable young people and families to assist them to access appropriate service provision within their local communities. This links to satisfaction with services and overall perception of the area in which people live.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 Undertaking a tender process would delay the introduction of this specialist service provision and would reduce the impact on our most vulnerable children, young people and families. The Citizen Advice Bureau is a well-established partner in Halton and have the skills and knowledge to provide this service. As well as them having the ability to draw in other resources and initiatives that would support the community of Halton. It would also impact

negatively on the delivery of the Supporting Families programme by Halton not being able to show evidence of outcomes therefore leading to the inability to claim payment by results for families.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The current proposal would not impact upon any equality and diversity issues as all relevant protected characteristics would be unaffected by the proposal.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None are applicable.

**10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None within the meaning of the Act.

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>REPORT TO:</b>         | Executive Board  |
| <b>DATE:</b>              | 20 <sup>th</sup> April 2023  |
| <b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b> | Executive Director, Children's Services  |
| <b>PORTFOLIO:</b>         | Children and Young People  |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>           | High Needs Provision Capital Allocation –<br>Proposed Expansion of Special Educational<br>Needs & Disability Provision – KEY<br>DECISION |
| <b>WARD(S)</b>            | Borough wide   |

## 1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 In March 2022 the Council received notification from the Department for Education that it would be allocated £3.3M in capital funding over a two year period to support the provision of new places and/or to expand existing provision for pupils and students with high needs. This report sets out the progress to date, and seeks the Board's approval for the proposals made, with regard to expanding the special educational needs and disability provision in Halton.

## 2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That**

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) the Board approves in principle the proposals for the additional Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision, and the issuing of statutory notices for those schools where applicable – detailed in Appendix A,

## 3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 In March 2022 the Council received notification from the Department for Education that it would be allocated £3.3M of capital funding (High Needs Provision Capital Allocation) over two years to support the provision of new places or to expand existing provision for pupils and students with high needs.

3.2 In the autumn term 2022, officers wrote to all schools to seek expressions of interest from them in offering new or additional SEND provision at their school, based against the required need as set out in the SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2022-25.

3.3 Nine Expressions of Interest from schools were received, seven were identified for progression to feasibility stage as detailed in Appendix A, as they met the need identified within the SEND Sufficiency Strategy. Based upon the 7 expressions of interest proposed to be taken forward, this will provide 97 additional SEND places within Halton at our existing mainstream schools, thereby supporting the Council's Inclusion Agenda. Officers have undertaken visits to those schools to establish their requirements in terms of capital investment with a view to progressing to feasibility stage with those proposals.

3.4 Some schools already have existing SEND provision and were offering to expand their current provision or offer additional new provision. For other schools the offer would be a completely new provision and would require the publication of a statutory notice in accordance with the Making Significant Changes ("Prescribed Alterations") to Maintained Schools 2023 guidance set against the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

3.5 Through this additional offer of specialist educational provision and support, Halton resident pupils will have access to provision in-borough where previously they may have attended out of borough provision which is costly. In addition, with out of borough placements there is usually a requirement to provide assistance with transport, and through the provision of in borough offers, that requirement for assistance with transport will significantly decrease.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The proposed programme of works will ensure that the Council can continue to offer and expand its in-borough special educational needs provision wherever possible, helping to reduce expensive out-borough placement and transport costs, and meet need more locally within Halton.

4.2 The Council has a duty under the Department for Education's Special educational needs and disability code of practice 2015 to support high quality provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN, with a focus on inclusive practice and removing barriers to learning. Through the offer of more localised specialist provision, the local authority can further build on its existing provision and continue to demonstrate the fulfilment of its duties in accordance with the code.

#### 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 All projects proposed will be funded from the High Need Provision Capital Allocation Grant allocated to the Council by the Department for Education.

- 5.2 Should the initial overall value of the projects proposed exceed the amount of capital funding available, then the projects will be value engineered to be met within budget. This has already been discussed with those schools who have submitted an expression of interest.
- 5.3 By investing in additional SEND provision in-borough, either through expansion of existing provision, or through completely new provision at existing schools, the Council will reduce its High Needs expenditure, which is currently funded through the High Needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, a significant amount of which is currently spent on out of borough provision. It is important that preventative action is taken now to help reduce financial costs to the Council in the future, and by retaining Halton resident pupils at local provision, this will help drive down placement and travel costs for the Council longer term.
- 5.4 Circa £1.6M has been set aside for the first phase of capital works as proposed in Appendix A, but these costs are subject to feasibility studies and procurement processes and will be value engineered in agreement with schools to meet the capital funding available. It is intended that these projects will be phased in terms of opening based on the capital work required, with the intention that some could open in September 2023, then January 2024 and the remainder in September 2024.
- 5.5 Whilst the current estimated costs of the proposed works are circa £1.6M, further capital works to expand SEND provision within borough are continuing to be explored and discussed with Halton's schools. Projects to support the wider SEND need in Halton are also being discussed, and a further report will be submitted to the Board in this regard.

## 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### 6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The Capital Programme will support continuing demand for in-borough special educational needs provision, allowing Halton resident pupils to remain in-borough where possible.

The Strategy will also support the SEND strategic plan to increase sufficiency of inclusive, educational provision in borough. Expanding the in borough offer will also support children and young people with SEND to achieve their aspirations and achieve strong outcomes, fulfilling their potential.

### 6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

As above

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**  
N/A

6.4 **A Safer Halton**  
N/A

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**  
N/A

## 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The demand for specialist support for children and young people with SEND is increasing, and places are currently limited within the borough. By expanding existing provision, and creating additional places, children can receive the support they need within the borough and help to reduce expenditure within the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

7.2 The Council has been allocated this funding from the Department for Education, as they also recognised a need for additional specialist places and provision in Halton, and through these proposed works, the Council demonstrates expenditure against need.

## 8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The High Needs Provision Capital Allocation provides capital funding to deliver new places, supporting learning in both mainstream and special provision and allows Halton resident pupils to be educated in-borough where possible.

## 9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Through the introduction of local provision, there will be a reduction in the number of children and young people needing out of borough provision, which in turn will help reduce fuel costs/emissions.

## 10.0 **REASON(S) FOR DECISION**

10.1 The Council is required to demonstrate appropriate identification of need against spend from the High Needs Capital Allocation Grant.

10.2 To deliver and implement the capital programmes.

## 11.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

None.

12.0 **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

It is intended that the first phase of additional provision could be offered from September 2023, the next phase from January 2024, and the remainder from September 2024.

13.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

| <b>Document</b>   | <b>Place of Inspection</b> | <b>Contact Officer</b> |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------|
| High Needs Provision Allocation 2022-24<br>Department for Education | People Directorate         | Catriona Gallimore     |
| Special educational needs and disability code of practice 2015      | People Directorate         | Catriona Gallimore     |

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**Expressions of Interest to proceed to feasibility stage and Statutory Notice publication (where applicable)**

| <b>School</b>                              | <b>Designation</b> | <b>Provision Offer</b>   | <b>Statutory Notice Required</b>                 |
|--|--------------------|--|--|
| Astmoor Primary                            | Primary            | Key Stage 1 & Key Stage 2 Social Emotional and Mental Health Resource Base<br><br>14 places in total   | Yes – as new provision                           |
| Oakfield Primary                           | Primary            | Key Stage 1 & Key Stage 2 Speech Language and Communication Needs and Complex Needs Resource Base<br><br>20 places in total (in addition to existing provision)                    | No as this is an expansion of existing provision |
| St Basil's Catholic Primary School         | Primary            | Early Years Foundation Stage Assessment area and Early Years Foundation Stage /Key Stage 1 Complex needs Resource Base<br><br>16 places in total                                   | Yes – as new provision                           |
| Saints Peter and Paul Catholic High School | Secondary          | Key Stage 3 & Key Stage 4 Autistic Spectrum Condition - High functioning Unit<br><br>16 places in total  | Yes – as new provision.                          |
| Victoria Road Primary                      | Primary            | Key Stage 1 & Key Stage 2 Social Emotional and Mental Health Resource Base<br><br>12 places in total   | Yes – as new provision                           |
| Westfield Primary                          | Primary            | Key Stage 1 & Key Stage 2 Speech Language and Communication Needs Resource Base<br><br>12 places in total  | Yes – as new provision                           |
| Woodside Primary                           | Primary            | Key Stage 1 Social Emotional and Mental Health Resource Base (as the school already have a Key Stage 2 Resource Base)<br><br>7 places in total (in addition to existing provision) | No as this is an expansion of existing provision |

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>REPORT TO:</b>         | Executive Board                               |
| <b>DATE:</b>              | 20 April 2023                                 |
| <b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b> | Operational Director – Community & Greenspace |
| <b>PORTFOLIO:</b>         | Employment, Learning, Skills and Community    |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>           | Cultural Strategic Vision                     |
| <b>WARDS:</b>             | Boroughwide                                   |

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval from members to adopt the Cultural Strategic Vision.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board**

- 1) gives delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Employment, Learning, Skills and Community, to finalise of the Cultural Strategic Vision ready for adoption; and**
- 2) approves the adoption of the Cultural Strategic Vision ‘The Crucible of Culture – The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough’.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Art Reach were commissioned to write a Cultural Strategy in 2022. They undertook consultation with various organisations and held workshops. They submitted a draft strategy to the Council in September 2022. The Council shared the document with the Cultivate Partnership (which includes Halton Council Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Employment, Learning and Skills, Leisure, Community and Culture) and it was agreed the document needed further work, before it could be a strategy.
- 3.2 The Cultivate Partners have invested time and expertise into translating the draft Strategy document produced by Art Reach, in to the Halton Cultural Report. The Cultivate Partners also identified the need for a Cultural Strategic Vision, which would be a public facing document. The Chief Executive for Norton Priory Museum kindly took on this piece of work. All Cultivate Partners have signed up to the Halton Cultural Report and Cultural Strategic Vision presented here today. Both documents are attached to this report in draft form. They have been shared with the Arts Council as a critical friend and subject to any changes suggested by the Arts Council, will be turned into glossy documents for adoption.
- 3.3 The Halton Cultural Report, Chapter 8 contains a high level Action Plan. This Action Plan will be developed further and become a live evolving document to facilitate the delivery of the Cultural Strategic Vision and will be developed in partnership with Cultural partners across Halton. There will be trio of Cultural

documents moving forward; the Halton Cultural Report, Cultural Strategic Vision and Action Plan.

- 3.4 A temporary externally funded Culture Officer post, has been created, utilising UK Share Prosperity Funding. This Officer will be responsible for developing the Action Plan and will facilitate Culture in the borough over the next 2 years. This Officer will assist in the preparations for Halton's 50<sup>th</sup> Celebration in 2024 and support Culture organisations to prepare for the next Borough of Culture in 2026. Subject to securing further external funding from the Borough of Culture pot, we would see this role continuing for a further 2 years. During this 4 year period the Culture Officer will help to secure funding to help build capacity in the Culture sector.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Halton has been without a Cultural Strategy and this has affected the ability for Cultural Organisations to bid for funding and has also limited the strategic overview for activity.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The funding for the post has been secured for the next two years, commencing 1 April 2023.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

There are no implications associated with this report.

##### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

There will be opportunities to build capacity within the sector.

##### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

Increasing the opportunities for local people and providing access to local Culture, will increase the opportunities for healthier living.

##### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

There are no implications associated with this report.

##### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

This Strategy underpins the good work of the Town Deal Board.

#### **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 Without the Cultural Strategic Vision being adopted, grants into the borough will continue to be restricted.

#### **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 8.1 Culture is open to all and we want everyone to engage.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 No adverse effects on the climate are anticipated. Two of the events being supported in 2023; Efofest and Makefest will help to support the education of the local community.

**10.0 LIST OF BACKRGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

| <b>Document</b>                  | <b>Place of Inspection</b> | <b>Contact Officer</b> |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Cultural Strategic Vision</b> | <b>Leisure Services</b>    | <b>Sally McDonald</b>  |
| <b>Halton Cultural Report</b>    | <b>Leisure Services</b>    | <b>Sally McDonald</b>  |





# HALTON CULTURAL REPORT

The Cultural Report for Halton Borough



**Halton Cultural Report:  
The Cultural Report for Halton Borough**

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## **Halton Cultural Report: The Cultural Report for Halton Borough**

### **Foreword**

I am delighted to introduce this Cultural Report for Halton Borough Council that will provide a framework for all our cultural services over the next five years. This Report informs the Vision document and will shape the Action Plan which accompanies the Vision. This Report was produced through a collaborative process between Halton Borough Council, Art Reach and representatives of Cultivate and Halton Heritage Partnership (HHP) forums.

We know that culture and heritage is important to our residents and visitors and these documents will enable the Council to work productively with cultural partners, funders and communities to deliver ambitious and innovative, participatory activity with a focus on the past, present and future of the Borough.

As we saw during Halton's Borough of Culture year in 2021 there is a lot to celebrate in Halton. We have wonderful cultural assets including Norton Priory Museum and Gardens, which has just become Halton's first National Portfolio Organisation, Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum and The Brindley, as well as our waterways, green spaces, and a growing creative industry sector. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need for cultural engagement demonstrating how, in challenging times, culture and creativity can be a source of inspiration and aspiration, resilience and positivity.

As well as making the most of our core assets the period ahead has lots of exciting new opportunities. The next couple of years will see extensive Town Fund investment in Runcorn, including an extension to The Brindley which will incorporate a library, creation of new green spaces and development for local creative industries and organisations. In 2024 Halton will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and, in 2026, we also have our next term as the Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture.

I look forward to seeing our cultural activity evolve, and to the delivery of a diverse portfolio of cultural activity that engages residents and visitors, and continues to celebrate Halton!

**Cllr Paul Nolan**

***Executive Board Member - Employment, Learning & Skills, Community & Culture***

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**1.0 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Report and Vision have been developed by Art Reach, Halton Borough Council and representatives of Halton’s cultural and creative sector, supported by Arts Council England.
- 1.2 The Report was developed in 2022, building on the legacy of Halton’s Borough of Culture year, *Celebrate Halton*, in 2021 and aims to develop the cultural sector of the Borough over the next 5 years, bringing it to the next Borough of Culture for Halton in 2026 and thus laying the foundations for a review of the Strategy, and creation of a new Vision and Action Plan over the following 5-10 years.
- 1.3 The consultation process aimed to identify the strengths within Halton’s cultural sector, the opportunities and potential for what already exists, and the areas that are lacking or need support. The Report and Vision aim to guide the direction of culture for all of Halton, for its people and its cultural organisations.
- 1.4 Halton has a wealth of self-starting creative organisations, established cultural networks and assets. With a strong heritage of industrial science and canal heritage, Halton also has a proud sense of heritage and community to build on.
- 1.5 The two main towns of Runcorn and Widnes exist either side of the River Mersey, linked by iconic bridges. This brings its challenges as well as its unique identity formed by the river, as both a uniting and dividing feature of Halton. The Report reflects the sense of strong community, heritage, self-starting creativity and collaborative working that exists in Halton and has huge potential to develop the Cultural Sector in the Borough.
- 1.6 The Report identified four key areas that need to be prioritised over the next 5 years. The Report concludes with a suggested Action Plan to draw together the relevant people and put in place a structure to drive and deliver the priorities identified and which will be developed over 2023.
- 1.7 The four priority areas, which were agreed in an open Sharing Day including 17 local organisations, are:
  1. **Leadership and coordination** – to set up the structures that make the most of existing networks, and ensure that culture becomes embedded across different agendas.
  2. **Communication** – to address the disparity between the enthusiasm found in cultural groups and organisations with the lack of recognition in the general public, to raise awareness of the vibrancy of the cultural sector in Halton, both within and beyond the Borough.
  3. **Diversity of programming** - to achieve diversity of audiences and participants – to raise aspiration in the Borough, make accessible opportunities for all and



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inspire people to achieve greater ambition.

4. **Celebration, inspiration, aspiration** – make use of the existing outdoor spaces and accessible spaces in Halton, and create larger, Borough-wide festivals and celebrations which bring together and build upon initiatives already in place, raising civic pride, developing skills and attracting funding into the Borough.

- 1.8 An overarching priority - that supports these four is Funding – taking advantage of opportunities to draw funding into the Borough. These four priority areas and funding form the basis of the Vision – see section 7.

## **2.0 Introduction**

### **2.1 What is a Cultural Strategy and why do we need one?**

Halton Borough Council has recognised that, in order to build on the Borough of Culture and take advantage of other cultural opportunities available, a Cultural Strategy for the Borough is required.

- 2.1.1 A Strategy can be understood as a set of principles which help guide decisions. The Strategy aims to identify approaches which will contribute towards a set of desired outcomes. The Strategy aims to provide a guide to all organisations and individuals who are engaged with culture in Halton, to ensure a shared vision and direction. This Report informs the Vision and Action Plan which together form the Cultural Strategy.
- 2.1.2 Used effectively, culture and the institutions and services of culture (museums, libraries, festivals and many other elements) can contribute toward the revitalisation of communities, the development of trust, improved health and wellbeing, and the possibility of a more positive future. In order to be effective, a Strategy and Vision is required to provide a sense of direction across the Borough, which can guide all organisations and lead to improved outcomes.\*
- 2.1.3 Having a Cultural Strategy and Vision in place, as well as strategic partnerships, increases the likelihood of securing larger amounts of funding, such as from Arts Council England. This is because those councils are seen as demonstrating a strategic commitment to culture and the role it can play for society. The inability to produce a Cultural Strategy for some councils not only results in a lack of a strategic cultural vision for the area, but also a lack of funding, which is already problematic against the challenging funding circumstances that most councils are currently facing.\*

### **2.2 Defining Culture and the scope of the Cultural Strategy**

- 2.2.1 Culture should be seen as not only the commissioning of arts and the production of events, but also as a tool that builds upon the heritage of the area; that builds a shared vision and identity for the area that is steeped in history and has a wealth of cultural assets; that builds the local economy particularly in the context of tourism

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and creative industries; that improves the local quality of life and encourages engagement in community activities; and that provides new ways of tackling challenges around health and wellbeing.\*

- 2.2.2 For the development of the Halton Cultural Strategy documents, Culture has been defined as **encompassing arts and heritage, with a strong sense of community identity and pride in its abundant open green spaces**. This provides the scope of the Strategy and Vision.

\* Source: *Cultural Strategy in a Box*, Local Government Association, February 2020

### **3.0 Consultation Process**

- 3.1 In order to create a strategic Vision that is relevant to the whole Borough, its people, heritage and cultural organisations, Art Reach was commissioned to undertake consultation across the Borough and draw up the Report informed by local people's and wider stakeholders' views.

- 3.2 The following consultation activity was undertaken from February to May 2022 and the full results are available at Appendix 2.

i. **Inception meeting** with Halton Borough Council staff including Libraries, The Brindley, Visitor Economy

ii. **Visits and meetings with stakeholders**, including:

- Halton Borough Council elected members
- Hazlehurst Studios
- A Place for Us CIC
- Norton Priory Museum and Gardens
- Halton Primary Arts Network (HPAN)
- Halton Heritage Partnership (HHP)
- Cultivate (Local Cultural Education Partnership)
- Arts Council England (ACE)
- Halton Regeneration Team
- Leisure Service at Halton Borough Council
- VCSFE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector)
- Sci Tech Daresbury

iii. **Creative workshops**:

- Public workshop at MakeFest in Runcorn Shopping City
- Public workshop at Widnes Market
- Public workshop at Halton Lea Library
- Community workshop at Chi Café
- Community workshop with young people at The Studio

iv. **Public consultation survey**.

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## **4.0 Context and Opportunities**

### 4.1 About Halton Borough

4.1.1 The Borough of Halton has a population of around 131,000, including Widnes and Runcorn, either side of the River Mersey. Cultural engagement generally in Halton is significantly lower than the national average. At the time of writing, the Audience Agency<sup>1</sup> Profiles in Halton, describing resident population cultural interests, are predominantly:

- **Frontline Families:** (most prevalent and significantly higher in proportion than the regional average): These are frugal, semi-urban renting families, light on arts and culture but heavy on community.
- **Trips & Treats:** Mainstream arts and popular culture fans influenced by children, family and friends.
- **Dormitory Dependables:** People living in suburbs and small towns, interested in heritage activities and mainstream arts.

### 4.2 Health and Wellbeing

4.2.1 The One Halton Health and Wellbeing Strategy was written for 2017-22 and which is now due for review. However, the Report identifies older people as a key target group, as there is a higher than average proportion of people aged 65+ in the Borough. Culture can play a part in this – there are identified needs for opportunities to tackle loneliness in the older population, which cultural activity can contribute to through social, cultural activity and events.

4.2.2 The One Halton Health and Wellbeing Strategy included an identified priority to improve mental health as there are higher levels than average of poor mental health in the Borough (Statistics are given further on in the Report). Again, culture can play a part in supporting overall mental wellbeing: by celebrating difference/diversity, sense of self and identity, enabling self-expression, therapeutic activity and providing joyful events, supporting connecting with people and creating shared celebrations.

4.2.3 Mental health is a major issue affecting many people and particularly since the Coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic which has had a profound effect on all aspects of society. Already it is evident that direct and indirect psychological and social effects are widespread, with data revealing that over half (53.1 percent) of British people have reported that it is affecting their well-being (Office of National Statistics, 'Coronavirus and the Social Impacts on Great Britain: 16 April 2020).

4.2.4 Culture can bring people together, especially for moments of regional, national and international significance. It can provide opportunities for engagement, as audience

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<sup>1</sup> Audience Agency [www.theaudienceagency.org](http://www.theaudienceagency.org)

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members, participants and as volunteers. It can develop new skills and passions and can enhance physical and mental strength and agility. Community organisations, such as those represented through HHP, rely on active and enthusiastic volunteers to deliver meaningful change and opportunities that benefit the wider community.

- 4.2.5 Additionally, there is a growing body of evidence to indicate that with increased feelings of stress and anxiety, many people are now seeking additional support within their communities, and this is where creative, cultural, art and science activities can help. Certainly, participation with museums and art, has the power to enhance health and wellbeing<sup>2</sup>. Below is an example of an intervention designed by Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum that aims to address mental health issues through engagement with science.
- 4.2.6 MindLab is an award-winning mental health programme (originally developed in 2019) and run by Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum, that offers participants a dual frame for mental health issues and well-being – a therapeutic one and a scientific/cultural one. Delivered three times per year over four weeks per theme, in partnership with one of the Borough’s leading mental health provider, Mind Halton, participants take part in group counselling led by a qualified counsellor and then participate in a variety of Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths (STEM) and creative activities led by Catalyst staff. The cycle of support consists of three elements – Manage Your Anxiety, Resilience Training, Manage Your Emotions. Capitalizing on the specialist resources within Catalyst, including a lab, classrooms, interactive museum exhibitions, a planetarium and an observatory, the project aims to incorporate science discovery into Mind Halton’s mental health programme for people in the local community. It is also a unique opportunity to explore their wellbeing in a supportive, inspiring, and creative environment.
- 4.2.7 In a report undertaken back in 2017 by Halton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), NHS Halton CCG states it will celebrate and support the immense value afforded from accessible, high quality cultural experiences to promote individual and community wellbeing through their partnership work and commissioning commitments, recognising that by engaging with cultural activity people are able to develop a strong sense of self, find purpose; achieve a level of self-determination and a sense of control which builds resilience. It is believed that cultural experiences help reduce barriers to learning and engagement; which helps people realise or fulfil a diversity of talents often unrecognised elsewhere and reach their true potential. This then creates building blocks for personal wellbeing whilst simultaneously providing an opportunity to promote economic wellbeing through investment in creativity and innovation.
- 4.2.8 Cultural experiences provide ways to wellbeing where other things fail. There is an important and robust evidence base which demonstrates when cultural know how is combined with medical knowledge we can create new exciting tools to help people

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<sup>2</sup> Konlaan et al. 2000; Chatterjee and Noble 2013; Napier et al. 2014.

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live well and support recovery. Too many of life's problems are seen as only amenable to medical treatment. We all too readily turn people into patients. There are no pills for loneliness and poverty but a rich cultural context can help ensure residents are better connected to each other and feel more able to cope.

### 4.3 Regeneration

4.3.1 There are several regeneration initiatives which connect with culture in Halton.

4.3.2 In Halton, Runcorn was selected as part of the government's Town Deal fund, a fund announced in 2019 to support 100 towns in England. Reconnecting Runcorn is the Runcorn Town Deal, undertaking 7 projects to regenerate an area of Runcorn, and Halton Borough Council received £23.6 million to improve the economic prospects of the old town. The Town Deal Investment Plan aims to improve long term economic growth with a focus on regeneration, improved transport infrastructure, better digital connectivity, skills and culture.

4.3.3 Relevant projects include:

- i. New enhancement of The Brindley Theatre with a large café/restaurant and outdoor space. The Granville Street Library will be relocated into The Brindley, inspired by the success of Storyhouse in Chester. This is part of a wider stated ambition to create a cultural hub for Runcorn.
- ii. The creation of a Health and Wellbeing Hub: part of its function is to signpost users to community and third sector provision that enhance wellbeing. Cultural activity can be linked to this as part of the offer.
- iii. New housing adjacent to the Theatre area, aiming to a) provide independent housing for older people, and b) attract young professionals who might want to settle and start families. These are both potentially additional visitors and audiences for the cultural offers at The Brindley. The theatre is considering how these potential audiences will affect their programming.
- iv. Creating a new visitor attraction called Unlock Runcorn, based on canal heritage. Located close to The Brindley, this can be seen as part of a "Cultural Hub" area and can be a joined up marketing strategy for the visitor economy.
- v. High Street connectivity, including a new pedestrian link from the High Street to The Brindley.
- vi. Creative and Digital Skills Centre. It also aims to create a link to The Brindley to generate more audiences to local creative and digital arts, refurbishing the Camden Buildings to create a Cultural Hub of creative organisations on the high street, including housing Mako Create, A Place for Us, Hazlehurst Studios and Power in Partnership (a youth development organisation).

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4.3.4 There is also an ambition to create a “Cultural Hub” in Runcorn, with The Brindley as a flagship cultural asset as an anchor – this requires joined up thinking, especially in terms of marketing Runcorn as a destination.

### 4.4 [Use of non-traditional cultural venues](#)

4.4.1 Following the national trend, Runcorn’s Shopping Centre has seen the demise of retail and suffers from many empty shop units. For many centres, effective recovery has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns and restrictions. However, as part of Celebrate Halton, a Culture HQ was set up in an empty unit in Runcorn Shopping Centre, which provided an information point for the Borough of Culture, as well as a venue for participatory arts activities and exhibitions. Many local organisations were positive about this initiative and how it helped them connect with the wider community.

4.4.2 Also a national trend, many shopping centres are turning to culture as a way of revitalising the attraction of their town centres and shopping areas. Culture HQ was an excellent pilot and exemplar of how culture could support the vibrancy of the town centre and could be used as a springboard for more partnership work between cultural organisations and Runcorn Shopping Centre.

4.4.3 The base of the local CVS – Halton and St Helens Voluntary and Community – in the former St Marie’s church building in Widnes, is another great example of the use of a non-traditional heritage base for the delivery of a heritage programme.

### 4.5 [Liverpool City Region \(LCR\)](#)

4.5.1 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) is a strategic authority with powers over transport, economic development and regeneration. In 2020 the combined authority started a land commission- reported as the first of its kind in England- to re-orientate the city-region's economy around community wealth building (in partnership with Centre for Local Economic Strategies.)

4.5.2 LCRCA is one of the few areas in the country to allocate 1% of its funding agreement to culture.

### 4.6 [LCR Culture and Creativity Strategy and Cultural Compact Business Plan](#)

4.6.1 The LCR Cultural Partnership facilitated the Compact with funding from Arts Council England (ACE), focusing on the role of culture to emerge from the pandemic in March 2021.

4.6.2 The Culture Working Group is delivering a number of LCR-wide initiatives, including Halton:

- Lost Castles (Norton Priory Museum and Gardens)
- Constellations (Victoria Park)

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- Bridge to Bamboo (2022-2023)

4.6.3 In addition, the Growth Platform operates a Visitor Economy Officers Group and Destination Marketing Board; the latter is delivering a SIF-funded destination marketing campaign until March 2025, looking to better promote the assets of the LCR Boroughs to visitors.

4.6.4 The above initiatives are led for Halton Borough Council's Programmes Office Manager and lead for Visitor Economy; and Halton Borough Council's Leader of the Council, is currently LCR Portfolio Lead for Culture, Tourism and Visitor Economy.

#### 4.7 Boroughs of Culture

4.7.1 Initiatives in the Compact include supporting the **Boroughs of Culture**, awarding the status with funding to the different local authorities in the Liverpool Region on a 5 yearly basis. In 2021, Halton had Borough of Culture status and this Report and Vision aims to build on the learning from that year of celebration. Halton's Borough of Culture was named **Celebrate Halton**, and one of its aims was to test the appetite for annual or biannual events.

4.7.2 Three strands developed for Celebrate Halton 2021, following consultation:

- Pioneers & Trailblazers – how people and heritage have a positive impact on Halton today and tomorrow
- Future Makers – investing in talent and offering aspiration around careers in the creative industries
- Creators – supporting and developing artists in Halton

4.7.3 Celebrate Halton built on established partnerships which already have strong networks in the Borough:

- Cultivate, Halton's Local Cultural Educational Partnership (LCEP)
- Halton Heritage Partnership (HHP)
- Halton's Primary Arts Network (HPAN) – 45 of the borough's primary schools

4.7.4 It also formed a Halton Borough of Culture Marketing Group, with key stakeholders, venues and businesses. HBC's Community Development Team connected community groups to artistic organisations across the borough. The Culture HQ retail unit in Runcorn Shopping Centre was set up by the Programmes Office at HBC, and managed by Hazlehurst Studios, as a hub for the Celebrate Halton Festival, and acted as a point for visitors to find out what's going on in the Festival, as well as a space for workshops and exhibitions by local artists.

4.7.5 Halton Borough Council's Programmes Office (formerly External Funding Team) led on the securing of match funding from Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), totalling £307,000.

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4.7.6 The consultation showed that co-ordination was the main element required, a hub or central point of information, as well as ‘connectors’ to connect communities to cultural activity.

4.8 [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#)

4.8.1 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund(UKSPF) succeeds the previous EU Structural Funds. As part of the government’s Levelling Up agenda, this fund will go directly to local places to support their aims. For Halton, the funds will be devolved through the LCR. Halton Borough Council’s element is led by the Programmes Office and is linked in at a high level through the LCR to ensure that Halton’s cultural needs are included in investment plans to use this funding. Halton’s allocation of the total funding is 7.9% and a sum of £188,000 has been allocated over a three year period for arts, culture and heritage.

4.9 [Cultural Assets and Forums](#)

4.9.1 Halton is home to many cultural assets which provide a range of arts, heritage and leisure offers, as well as reflecting particular aspect of Halton’s industrial heritage, resulting in science and technology centres that represent this important aspect of Halton’s past, present and future.

4.9.2 Some of Halton’s physical cultural assets include: Norton Priory Museum and Gardens, Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum, The Brindley, The Studio, Riverside College, SciTech Daresbury, Hazlehurst Studios, The Lewis Carroll Centre, Halton Castle, the Childe of Hale and its canals and waterways, parks and nature reserves.

4.10 Network organisations

4.10.1 **Cultivate**

4.10.2 Cultivate Halton currently operates as Halton’s Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP). A consortium of independent organisations with the shared aim of supporting the children and young people of Halton borough to gain a better start in life through cultural education. Each partner has their own set of goals and strategies, but they all have the common interest of helping to make Halton as culturally diverse, engaging and creative as possible.

4.10.3 Cultivate is a strong group and has undertaken some development to identify its strategic aims and has a representation of organisations. The group has recognised that there are more needs for culture that go beyond the remit of an LCEP and the group is, therefore, looking to expand its remit and will act as the key cultural forum going forward to support the delivery of Halton’s Cultural Strategic Vision.



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4.10.4 See full list of current Cultivate members at Appendix 1

4.10.5 Halton Heritage Partnership (HHP)

4.10.6 HHP is a constituted group, and successfully attracted lottery funding to establish the *Exploring Halton's Collections* initiative, a really good example of a collaboration between four heritage sites sharing their collections as part of one project. This has formed a good grounding for further partnership work. HHP also co-ordinates Heritage Open Days, with the support of the Programmes Office (formerly External Funding Team) at HBC, as part of the national annual celebration of Heritage.

4.10.7 See full list of current HHP members at Appendix 1

4.10.8 Halton Primary Arts Network (HPAN)

4.10.9 HPAN is an initiative set up by the headteacher of Beechwood Primary School to encourage engagement in the arts for young children. HPAN organises an annual celebration of children's achievements in the arts, involving 45 schools and aiming to involve more. HPAN are also developing projects to bring arts expertise into schools for the benefit of children's creative education. The initiative is financed by member subscription and they undertake their own fundraising for projects.

**4.11 Strategic Opportunities**

4.11.1 Arts Council England (ACE)

4.11.2 Although Halton is not currently listed as a Priority Place for ACE, it is one of 109 Levelling Up for Culture places in England and there are still a number of strategic priorities that ACE has that Halton can take advantage of. The Arts Council's **Let's Create Strategy**, published in 2020, has an emphasis on creating artistic opportunity to more people who currently do not have access to quality opportunities, and ensuring inclusivity. As a place that has been recognised as having relatively low cultural engagement, projects in Halton that bring opportunities to participate in, experience or develop skills in the arts within the Borough have the potential to be supported by Arts Council England. Two of the Arts Council's specific Outcomes are also priority areas for Halton: Outcome 1, Creative People, is about ensuring that everybody has access to quality opportunities to participate in the arts, particularly young people but also everybody throughout their lives; Outcome 2, Cultural Communities, emphasises communities and organisations working together to create thriving and vibrant cultural places. Halton already has developing borough-wide cultural networks such as Cultivate, HHP, and the beginnings of culture becoming more embedded in other priority areas, particularly in regeneration.

4.11.3 The formalisation of Cultivate as the overarching cultural forum for Halton, that starts to bring together representation from more areas including health and wellbeing, economic development, parks and outdoor spaces, etc. would generate

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even more potential to support the Arts Council's Outcome 2.

- 4.11.4 Initiatives such as the Borough of Culture and the activity that can be galvanised to work towards the festival will also work better with a cross-community approach, bringing organisations together to make wider impact, as well as being a catalyst to support the development of people's own creative activity in the Borough.
- 4.11.5 The Arts Council's **National Portfolio Organisation(NPO)** scheme supports organisations undertaking significant arts programmes with multi-year funding agreements, providing sustained funding support that can really enhance the impact that organisations can make. As organisations in Halton develop their programmes, they could look towards NPO status and funding as a goal, with the next round for applications likely to be in 2026/7. Norton Priory Museum and Gardens now operates as Halton's first NPO from April 2023; over the next few years other organisations could also build on their strategic work to be better placed to consider this option.
- 4.11.6 **Creative People and Places (CPP)** is a funding programme which focuses on parts of the country where involvement in creativity and culture is significantly below the national average. It is funded by the National Lottery and administered by Arts Council England. Projects are led by consortia and must include community groups and/or grass-roots organisations as well as cultural organisations such as museums, libraries or arts organisations. Other partners might include clubs, housing associations, private-sector organisations or universities.
- 4.11.7 Consortia are only eligible to apply to CPP if they are included in the Arts Council England's list of places of lowest engagement. Halton is currently on that list and a CPP application was submitted; although unsuccessful, there remains an ambition to carry this work forward.
- 4.11.8 **National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)**
- 4.11.9 NLHF, as the UK's biggest heritage funder, set out their strategy for 2019-2024. The strategy recognises the role of heritage in wellbeing, and increases its focus on wellbeing, capacity-building and innovation. Their two priority areas are landscapes and nature, and community heritage. In addition, all projects funded by NLHF have to meet their inclusion outcome of "a wider range of people will be involved in heritage". All these areas connect with the priorities in Halton for heritage too. Organisations in Halton have already successfully accessed NHLF funding, including to develop the Halton Virtual Museum, and more recently £207,000 for the delivery of Celebrating Halton's Heritage project that was part of Halton's Borough of Culture Programme and a £100,000 development grant for Catalyst to begin to refresh its heritage offer. There is groundwork to build on, as well as scope for the NLHF to further support work in Halton.

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**4.12 Liverpool City Region initiatives**

4.12.1 As previously stated, the LCR places culture as a significant part of its strategic plans, with the LCR Culture and Creativity Strategy and Cultural Compact Business Plan, as well as the Borough of Culture initiative. Halton has already taken advantage of these initiatives with the Borough of Culture in 2021, and remains connected in to the LCR initiatives, with an eye to the next Borough of Culture for Halton. Halton is also heavily involved in the Bridge to Bamboo and World Reimagined projects.

**5.0 SWOT Analysis**

5.1 Art Reach worked on developing a SWOT analysis with consultees and some of the key comments they received are detailed below:

**5.2 Strengths**

- *The legacy of Celebrate Halton – brought organisations together, and tested a Culture Hub in Runcorn Shopping Centre.*
- *Strong, active, motivated and ambitious arts and heritage organisations in the Borough, including Norton Priory Museum and Gardens, Hazlehurst Studios, A Place for Us CIC, The Studio (music), Cultivate (LCEP) and HHP.*
- *Halton Primary Arts Network (HPAN) has been self-organised since 2016 by the Headteacher at Beechwood Primary School, Runcorn, who coordinates an annual showcase at the The Brindley of performances by children from all the primary schools, celebrating their achievements and raising aspirations, and developing excellence, including through holding Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers and projects such as currently working with Royal Opera House. They are also linking in more to local projects including Celebrating Halton's Heritage and with Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum. The Accent Music Education Hub support them.*
- *Halton has an abundance of good quality open green spaces, iconic bridges and riverside walks.*
- *Norton Priory Museum and Gardens has been awarded National Portfolio Organisation status by the Arts Council England.*

**5.3 Weaknesses**

- *No defined central leadership to date for Culture at local authority officer level. Also Arts development role has vanished from HBC, leaving a gap in service for the Borough along with an expectation for those who remember the arts development role that HBC used to be able to deliver.*
- *Culture HQ longevity not sustained beyond March 2022.*
- *There is currently no 'go to' place for people to find out what's on locally. The Celebrate Halton website (Visit Halton) that offered a central cultural listing has*

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*lapsed since the Borough of Culture, and there seems to be no identified structure for who could continue facilitating this.*

- *Some of the annual Civic events that used to run no longer continue. Since the annual Halton Show and art exhibition ceased and the Vintage Rally was postponed (due to return in 2024), there is no regular annual festival activity that local creatives can work towards being involved in. This needs to be redesigned and brought back in collaborative, useful, accessible and sustainable fashion, as soon as possible, in order to make best use of the Borough of Culture legacy.*
- *Many of the cultural groups and organisations are in survival mode and unable to see beyond and plan for growth or development.*
- *Many organisations, such as HPAN, feel that local media and press do not represent their activities or showcase the cultural activity in the borough so there is a lack of awareness in the general public of what is being achieved.*

5.4 Opportunities

- *The wider regeneration programme in Runcorn (Camden Buildings, The Brindley etc) presents an opportunity to use cultural activity to promote regeneration, bring the community together, raise the profile and positivity of the area, raise profile of local creative activity growth and ambition e.g. Hazlehurst Studios' plans. There is already talk of this being the Cultural Quarter for the Borough, which could be a brand to promote the ambition and aspiration of this development and the arts organisations involved.*
- *Norton Priory has ambition to be a leading cultural hub for Halton. They see their role as supportive to other cultural organisations in Halton.*
- *Arts Council England recognises that Halton is investing in regeneration and cultural assets. ACE is encouraged by the Camden Buildings development, Norton Priory Museum and Garden's work and the development at The Brindley Theatre. ACE are following developments and it feels like the legacy from the Borough of Culture has sparked an interest and support from ACE for Halton's development. ACE wants to see culture embedded in the Borough Council at leadership level, and wants to see culture a part of statutory services such as Education, Economic Development and Health. ACE would like to see an overarching culture group that meets regularly with Halton BC, to coordinate culture and work on their cultural plan across areas such as Education, Health, Open Spaces, Regeneration, and Visitor Economy, Events, and Libraries. ACE believes that the best role for HBC is to facilitate the cultural sector to be self-sufficient, providing quality venues and facilities but not a delivery role, so that local groups can deliver activity within those facilities. HBC need to better co-ordinate the money that they are spending on regeneration and facilities through a cultural forum, as described elsewhere in the Report.*
- *There is commitment from the Borough Council to introduce a part-time Culture Officer role, which would facilitate and support co-ordination of external organisations and groups who want to undertake cultural activity. This Officer would act as the named contact person to provide a central point of contact for*

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*external groups. The role could also provide the facilitation of meetings of a wider cultural forum (Cultivate), which could be chaired by the Council's Cultural Portfolio holder to provide status and link back into the Council for strategic value. The cultural forum would drive the delivery of the Cultural Strategy, which would then be monitored as part of the existing Borough Council reporting structure.*

- *The legacy of Culture HQ perhaps provides an opportunity to find spaces for visual arts. The Borough Council could act as a broker (through the proposed facilitator role) between arts groups and places such as Runcorn Shopping Centre. Possibility for brokering commissions for visual artists to brighten up the empty unit shop fronts, and create vibrancy in the shopping centre.*
- *The wealth of green spaces in Halton should be seen as cultural assets and considered for cultural activity. This links with wellbeing and accessibility agendas, being highly accessible spaces and encouraging outdoors social and physical activity.*
- *Visitor Economy remit needs to form part of the cultural vision for Halton and provide a joined up picture of the key cultural assets in the Borough, their roles and how they complement each other to provide a fuller cultural offer. Halton BC is now part of a Single Investment Fund (SIF) funded Destination Marketing Programme which will run over the next three years to promote the LVR assets. Halton BC has commissioned Viv'id to deliver its Destination Marketing programme, including reinvigorating Visit Halton and reconvening Halton's Visitor Economy Network.*
- *Other Runcorn Regeneration projects can also present an opportunity to support cultural development: Runcorn Station skills centre/incubator for new SMEs can support new cultural organisation and creative industries.*
- *Cultivate (the LCEP) is a strong group with enthusiasm and some expertise. They recognise that a leadership role in the Borough is required for Culture, and they may well be a group well-placed to provide this.*
- *LCR's initiatives include the Borough of Culture which comes to Halton every 5 years. Halton's Cultural Strategy and Vision needs to feed through into these major funding bids to ensure that Halton continues to gain from those opportunities.*
- *There is expertise in the Borough for business and organisational development which, if linked up, could support developing cultural organisations.*
- *Halton Borough Council's Community Development Team supports cultural organisations. The Team can support with initial set up of groups and some initial funding.*
- *Halton Borough Council's Programmes Office supports with various cultural initiatives; The Programmes Office Manager sits on the LCR Culture Officers Group and co-ordinates Halton's involvement in LCR cultural initiatives. They are also the lead for Visitor Economy and sits on the Visitor Economy Officers Group and the Destination Marketing Board. The Team led on a number of successful strands of the Borough of Culture programme, namely Culture HQ and*

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*Celebrating Halton's Heritage. They sit on Cultivate and HHP forums and are very experienced in this field and are well placed to ensure involvement from relevant forums and organisations in a range of cultural initiatives.*

- *A Centralised cultural listings site was active on <https://celebratehalton.co.uk/> during Borough of Culture but has been abandoned since then. However, the website is still there and could be revived and built upon to address the need for a central listings site. It would require someone to approve or coordinate / upload the listings and promote it.*
- *Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum has a new Community Engagement Co-ordinator in post who has enthusiasm and imaginative ideas for new ways to engage. This role will show the museum is a community neighbour and doing more to engage local people in the museum, as they already do well for visitors from further afield. Catalyst has an ambition to develop links between culture, heritage and wellbeing and do more outreach work.*

**5.5 Threats**

- *The Brindley has to continuously work to an annual break even financial position, which requires balancing with Community Activity. Many organisations feel that The Brindley is a flagship cultural venue and could promote community-led culture more. However, The Brindley's role needs clearer defining in these terms, and how its new development will affect its operation and priorities.*
- *Financial pressures on the Borough Council make them wary of committing to support culture, especially delivery of activity, however there is willingness to support culture in Halton through a facilitation and coordination role and they would consider supporting a specific cultural coordinating role, especially if funds could be brought in from an external funder.*
- *Transport is an issue across the Borough and has been highlighted by several venues as a barrier to their accessibility to people without cars.*

**6.0 Vision**

6.1 A Vision document, *The Crucible of Culture*, now complements this Report, developed by Halton Borough Council and creative and cultural partners.

6.2 A crucible is a ceramic or metal container in which metals or other substances may be melted or subjected to very high temperatures. It reflects the chemical industries which the borough is founded upon. It is a place in which elements can interact, leading to the creation of something new.

6.3 The Vision's roots can be traced back to the Celebrate Halton initiative, as part of Halton's Borough of Culture celebrations in 2021. The Celebrate Halton initiative provided a place to start for this.

6.4 The definition of Culture in this Report places an emphasis on community pride, which is reflected in the heritage and some of the unique assets of Halton, such as

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the iconic bridges and the chemical industry heritage. Today, this industrial heritage has become a focus on science and technology.

- 6.5 There is a sense that grass roots organisations are getting on with it and taking a proactive approach to making things happen, although they acknowledge that they often need support and the benefit of expertise to help them achieve their aims.
- 6.6 Partnership working is certainly strengthening in Halton’s cultural sector, and there is strong willingness to do more together to benefit the Borough; this sense of working together and desire for the Council to be an enabling force is reflected in the Vision statement.
- 6.7 The Council’s own Vision in its Corporate Plan<sup>3</sup> is: “Halton will be a thriving and vibrant Borough where people can learn and develop their skills; enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality; sustained by a thriving business community; and safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhoods.”
- 6.8 Cultivate recognised in their vision development that they want Halton to be a place where children and young people have a full and true sense of belonging within their community, where they feel an increased sense of connected community. Therefore, there is a sense of better quality of life and sense of community and connectedness within Halton’s overall vision.
- 6.9 The **Vision Statement** for Halton in *The Crucible of Culture* states: ***Our Vision is to establish Halton as a crucible of culture, bringing together elements of excellence to create a new, vibrant cultural economy, improving health and wellbeing for residents and visitors alike, whilst building a strong economic platform and creative opportunities for all.***

## 7.0 Priority Areas

- 7.1 The following areas for priority were drawn up following the consultation period and through further discussion with Cultivate partners and together provide the basis for a new way of working between Halton Borough Council and those organisations, be they professional, amateur, or volunteer-led, which form the bedrock of the Borough’s vibrant cultural sector.
- 7.2 Leadership: Providing a conduit between Halton Borough Council and the Borough’s Cultural Sector to maximise opportunities and establish culture as a cross-cutting priority that forms a golden thread through the Council’s different agendas.
- 7.3 Communication: To increase awareness of cultural opportunities and activities with both residents of and visitors to Halton. Halton has an active cultural sector, the

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<sup>3</sup> 2018-2020

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vibrancy and impact of which can only be enhanced through heightened public awareness.

- 7.4 Diversity: To ensure programming speaks to the widest possible audience, providing a voice and a creative space for everyone, whilst raising aspiration and providing talent and skill development opportunities for all ages.
- 7.5 Dynamism: To enable aspiration, ambition and creative excellence to flourish across the Borough, through supporting bold and energetic programming at a Borough-wide level showcasing creative confidence at the heart of the crucible of culture.
- 7.6 Further information on these can be found in the Vision document.

### 8.0 Action Plan

- 8.1 The following section suggests elements that could form part of an Action Plan to begin setting to drive and deliver the Vision over the next five years. A planning schedule with wide steering groups and focused task groups will ensure that plans are robust and manageable and will deliver real outcomes for culture in Halton.
- 8.2 Funders will look favourably on strong plans that have been developed over time and grounded in community need.

| Item | Action  | Task Lead | Timescale   |
|------|---|-----------|---|
| 1    | Establish new externally funded Culture Officer role in HBC who can act as first point of call for cultural groups needing support.   | HBC       | End of April 2023   |
| 2    | Establish Cultivate as the cultural forum for Halton and develop to include regeneration, wellbeing, skills development and young people and align with Visitor Economy delivery.<br><br>A dedicated Champion for the Cultural Vision should be identified from this group and could be a role that rotates to different people annually. The new Culture Officer role at HBC will convene and co-ordinate the meetings.<br><br>The new cultural forum will drive elements of the strategy. | HBC       | Cultural forum re-established/expanded and first meeting held second quarter 2023 |
| 3    | Cultivate to agree the Vision and agree a Terms of Reference and remit for the group, which is to drive the Vision. Cultivate to decide on the frequency of its meetings and to plan regular  | Cultivate | By July 2023  |



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|   |   |  |                                    |
|---|---|--|------------------------------------|
|   | reviews (at least twice per year) of progress against the Strategy, re-focusing as necessary.   |  |                                    |
| 4 | <p>Cultivate to consider smaller Task Groups to take on specific areas and drive projects, such as:</p> <p>Festivals/Events group – working toward 2024 Birthday of the Borough and Borough of Culture 2026;</p> <p>Communications group – addressing the campaign to raise awareness and create a central point for people seeking information about what’s on in the Borough.</p> <p>Diverse Representation Group – addressing diversity of representation in leadership roles – this could be about giving young people a voice, giving older people better access, supporting access for people with protected characteristics etc., identifying the groups who need support for access to opportunities and engagement;</p> <p>Regeneration group – to continue to support regeneration plans through culture, linking to support health and wellbeing, skills development and knowledge sharing, developing facilities (e.g. re-purposing buildings) for the Borough.</p> | Cultivate  | Task groups identified by end 2023 |
| 5 | Plan towards 2024, the 50 <sup>th</sup> Birthday of the Borough. Utilise this for a celebration and awareness raising of Halton as a cultural place, celebrating innovation, linking between arts and its science heritage etc. 2024 could be used as a launch pad for the communication campaign and a catalyst to explore Halton further as a creative and cultural place.  | Festivals/Events Group with Communications Group and Viv’id (Destination Marketing campaign) | Develop a plan first half of 2023  |

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|   |  |                                |                                 |
|---|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 6 | Plan towards the next Borough of Culture, to link the Birthday celebrations into the next Borough-wide cultural celebration in 2026. | Festivals/Events Group         | Planning begins end of 2024     |
| 7 | Review the Action Plan twice yearly and refocus for the three-year period.   | Culture Officer with Cultivate | Sept 2023; March 2024 and so on |

A separate, fuller Action Plan will be developed during 2023.

## 9.0 Appendices

### 9.1 Appendix 1: Cultivate Partners and Halton Heritage Partners – current membership list

**Cultivate:**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| A Place For Us CIC                     | Artistic Directors   |
| Accent Music Hub                       | Music Education Commissioner and Deputy Music Education Commissioner   |
| Catalyst SDC & Museum                  | Community Engagement Co-ordinator  |
| CHI Community Café                     | Director   |
| Cronton 6th Form College               | Head of Centre of Excellence for the Arts  |
| Curious Minds                          | Cultural Education Manager   |
| Daresbury Laboratory (Sci-Tech)        | Senior Public Engagement Officer   |
| Ella Together CIC                      | Manager  |
| Halton Borough Council                 | Executive Board Member - Employment, Learning & Skills, Community & Culture; Programmes Officer Manager, Community Development Officer, Libraries Development Officer, Leisure Services Divisional Manager, Brindley Theatre Manager |
| Halton HPAN                            | Beechwood School Head  |
| Halton Heritage Partnership (HHP)      | Chair  |
| Hazlehurst Studios/Independent Artists | Director/Artist  |
| Mako Create                            | Director   |

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|                                  |                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Mersey Gateway Environment Trust | Chief Executive        |
| Norton Priory Museum and Gardens | Chief Executive        |
| St Martin's Primary School       | Headteacher            |
| The Castle Pub                   | Publicans              |
| The Heath School                 | Cultural Arts Director |
| The Studio (LOOSE)               | Studio Manager         |
| Widnes Academy                   | Principal              |

**Halton Heritage Partnership:**

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum | St Marie's Heritage Group        |
| Daresbury District Heritage Group            | The 8D Association               |
| Halton Borough Council Libraries             | The Danny                        |
| Norton Priory Museum and Gardens             | Sankey Canal Restoration Society |
| Phoenix Amateur Photography                  | U3A                              |
| Preston Brook and District History Group     | Widnes Family History Group      |
| Runcorn and District Historical Society      | Widnes Historical Society        |
| Runcorn Family History Group                 | Widnes RUFC – The Wids           |
| Runcorn Locks Restoration Group              | Widnes Rugby League Museum       |
| Runcorn Town Hall                            |                                  |

9.2 [Appendix 2: Consultation report](#)

9.3 [Appendix 3: Vision Document, \*The Crucible of Culture\*](#)



# Halton Cultural Strategy Consultation Results



ArtReach

## Contents

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## Background

Halton Borough Council are partnering with arts and cultural charity Art Reach to develop a Cultural Strategy for Halton for the next 5 years.

In 2021, the towns of Runcorn and Widnes came together to #CelebrateHalton with a series of cultural, creative and community-led events thanks to securing a year of being Liverpool City Region’s Borough of Culture. Working in partnership with Art Reach, a UK based cultural development charity, Halton Borough Council and the local communities created a year-long calendar of celebrations, which are now leading on to bigger ambitions for the local area.

Building on the legacy of the Borough of Culture, a Cultural Strategy will be created to strengthen the arts, heritage, creativity and wellbeing sectors in Halton. In order to ensure that the Strategy is place-specific and responds to the needs and interests of people in Halton, the Strategy will be informed by wide consultation. A series of consultations with community groups, local workers, creative and cultural organisations, stakeholders and the wider public, were undertaken from February to May 2022 to capture local people’s thoughts, ambitions and hopes for the future.



## Consultation undertaken

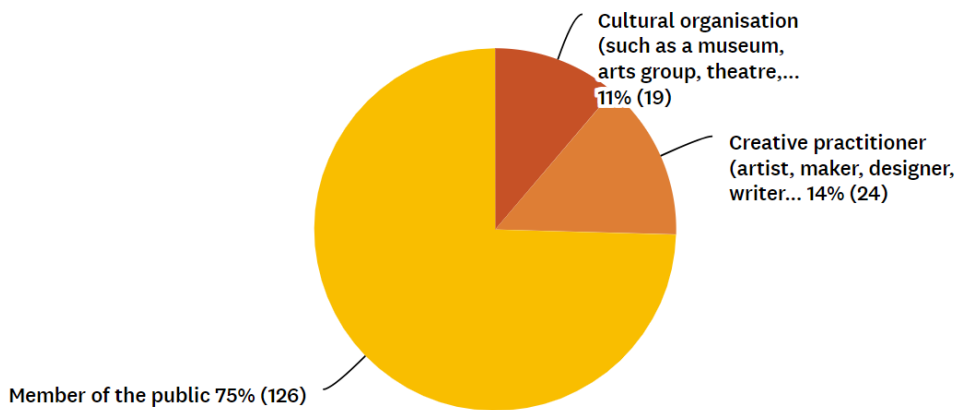
1. Inception meeting with Halton Borough Council staff including Libraries, The Brindley, Visitor Economy
2. Visits and meetings with stakeholders, including:
  - Halton Borough Council elected members
  - Hazelhurst Studios
  - A Place for Us
  - Norton Priory
  - Halton Primary Arts Network
  - Halton Heritage Partnership
  - Cultivate
  - Arts Council England
  - Halton Regeneration Team
  - Leisure Service at Halton Borough Council
  - VCSFE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector)
  - Sci Tech
3. Creative workshops:
  - Public workshop at MakeFest in Runcorn shopping city
  - Public workshop at Widnes market
  - Public workshop at Halton Lea Library
  - Community workshop at Chi Café
  - Community workshop with young people at The Studio
4. Public consultation survey.

## Survey results

In the online survey, we achieved a good number of responses from members of the public, demonstrating that we did manage to reach beyond people involved in the cultural sector.

### Are you completing this survey as a cultural organisation, a creative practitioner or a member of the public?

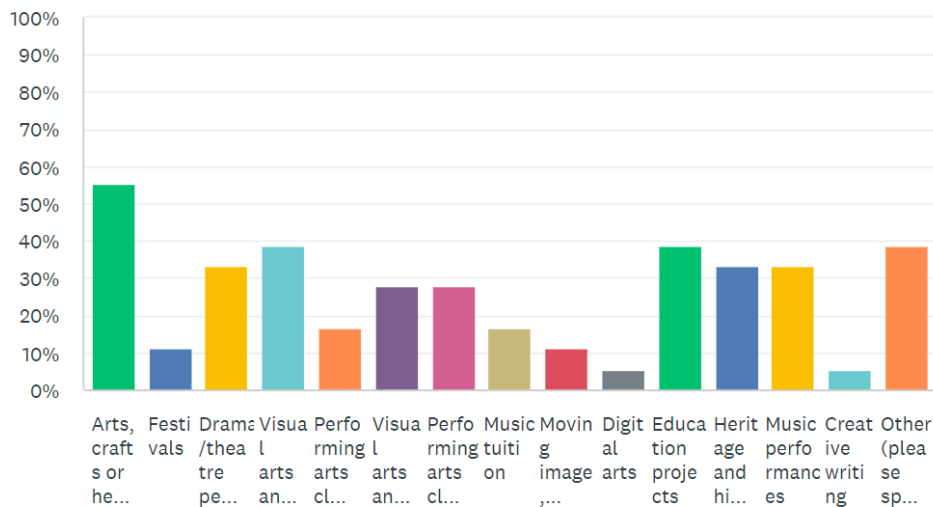
Answered: 169 Skipped: 0



A good variety of artforms and activities seem to be delivered in Halton: though it seems low on Festivals, Digital Arts and Creative Writing.

### What kind of activities do you deliver?

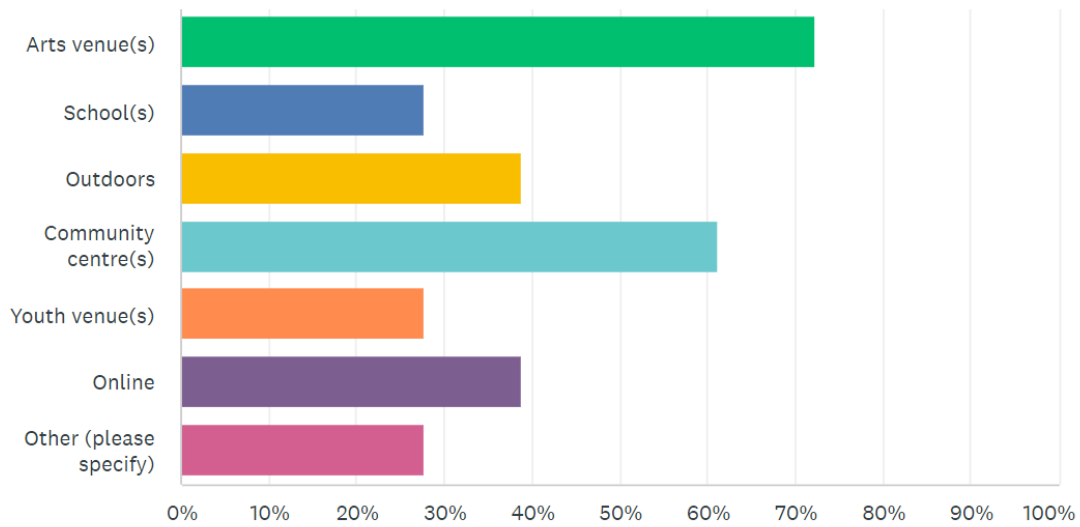
Answered: 18 Skipped: 151





**Where do you deliver this activity? Please indicate all that are relevant.**

Answered: 18 Skipped: 151

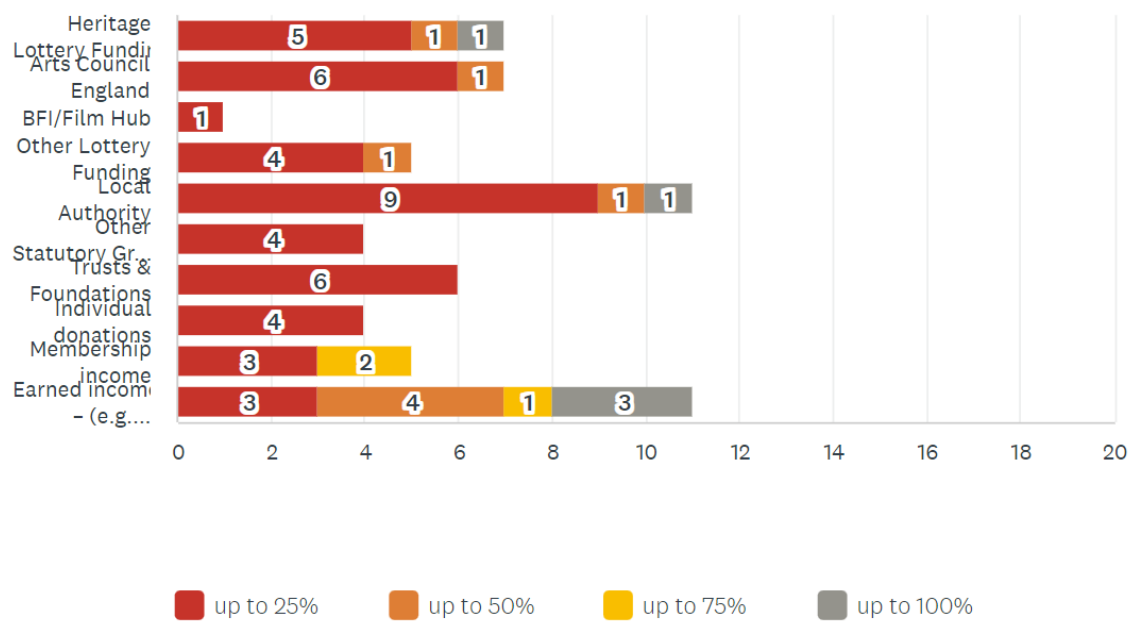


**For most cultural organisations in Halton, they do not rely on only one or a few sources of funding, but have a mixture of funding sources.** This indicates good resilience within the sector.

8 out of 11 organisation who responded have over 25% of their funding from earned income, and over 75% for 3 organisations.

**How are you funded? State the approximate percentage of funding for each category.**

Answered: 17 Skipped: 152





### How would you describe cultural provision (arts and heritage) in Halton?

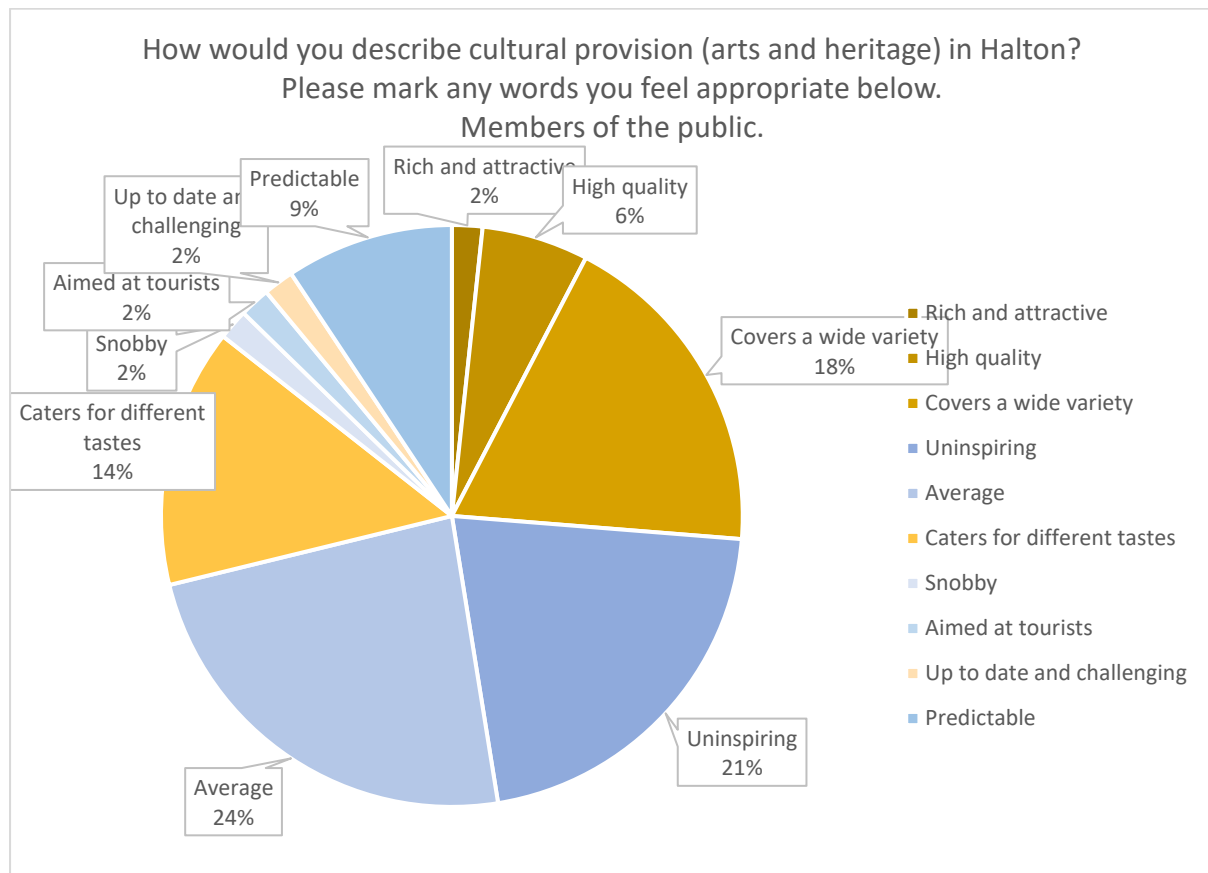
The pie charts below show more positive responses in yellows, with negative or neutral responses in blue.

Members of the public seemed overall more negative about cultural provision than the cultural organisations. When creative practitioners' responses were separated out, their overall responses were close to the members of the public responses.

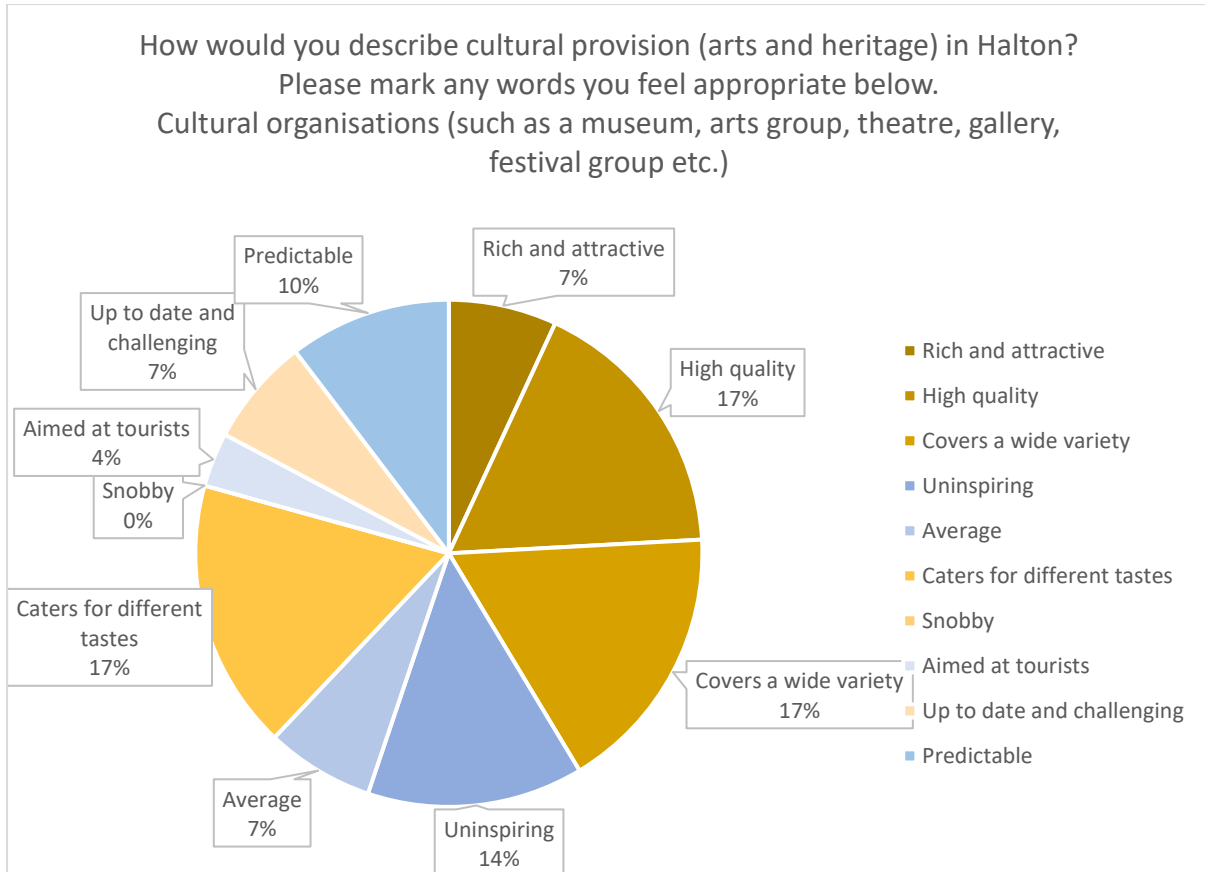
This suggests that the work that cultural organisations are doing is not high in the awareness of members of the public, suggesting that more communication and celebration of Halton's cultural activity is needed to change these perceptions.

In common with all groups, around 17% felt that culture in Halton covers a wide variety (18% public; 17% organisations) and caters for different tastes (14% public; 17% organisations). However, text responses showed that many people said they wanted more variety on offer.

#### Members of the public said:



**Cultural organisations said:**



**The following questions asked for text responses.** We have created word clouds for a quick overview. More detail on the main themes from the text are included in the following section: Themes from survey.

Think about the different creative and heritage activities, events, festivals, venues or creative companies near you. Which ones do you like and why? If you don't get involved with any, please tell us why.



What do you think needs to happen or change in Halton to help make your ideas in the last question take place?



What was the best thing about Celebrate Halton Borough of Culture? For example, was it a sense of pride for Halton, opportunities for young people to get creative, or the buzz it created for the town?



## Themes from survey

**Survey Question: Think about the different creative and heritage activities, events, festivals, venues or creative companies near you. Which ones do you like and why? If you don't get involved with any, please tell us why.**

Places/activities that respondents said they like (in order of popularity):

Norton Priory 26 mentions

The Brindley 24 mentions

The Studio Widnes 17

Libraries 14

Culture HQ 10

Hazelhurst Studios 9

Mako Create 8

Catalyst 8

A Place For Us 4

MakeFest 3

Reasons respondents gave for not getting involved:

Not aware – they feel they don't know what's on offer or how to find out about it.

Not for them – would like to see a better range on offer; there are too many short, one-offs, need more long term activity; lack of ambition.

**What do you think needs to happen or change in Halton to help make your ideas take place?**

Support from the Council

Dedicated role or department for arts

Investment and funding

Community engagement

Marketing

Affordability

More venues available for community activity

Other – more ambition, variety, balance of events, fresh thinking and new approaches.

**What was the best thing about Celebrate Halton Borough of Culture? For example, was it a sense of pride for Halton, opportunities for young people to get creative, or the buzz it created for the town?**

Culture HQ in the shopping centre

Didn't know about it

Opportunity for young people

Partnerships

The buzz

Nothing

Opportunities for everyone

Live Music

**What would you like to see happen at the next Celebrate Halton Borough of Culture?**

More activities for people of all ages

Celebrate local history

Opportunities for local artists

Better marketing

More of the same but bigger!

Community Leadership

Legacy - things that are sustainable beyond the event

Make better use of outdoor spaces

Include the whole Borough

**What kind of cultural activity would you like to see happen more regularly in Halton?**

Outdoor spaces used for culture – 14

Classes/workshops/clubs – 13

Theatre – 7

Craft/Artisan/Makers Markets – 7

Music concerts – 7

Heritage events – 7

Gallery Space – 4

Music Festival - 3

Art installations/exhibition – 3

Networks - 3

Cinema - 2

Spoken word/literary festival/Poetry - 2

More for older residents – 1

Street Art - 1

Artist studios - 1

Carnival - 1

Photography Competition - 1

Museum - 1

Light events - 1

Vintage rally - 1

Dance - 1

## **Any Other Comments**

Engage the Community in decision making and conversation

Better Communications

Better use of existing assets – link up services like wellbeing with creativity; more variety of shows; address gaps (e.g. no art gallery); use the canal, green spaces and The Studio more for creative events.

More accessible – arts, culture and heritage is for everybody

Across the whole borough

Be more ambitious

Large scale events - to get everyone involved and inspire ambition

More Variety – cover all artforms

Other ideas – revive town twinning initiative to create international links for culture

## Themes from interviews

The following themes were identified through interviews and public and community consultation activity. A number of themes were common between both groups.

### Themes from stakeholder interviews

Partnership between council and local organisations is needed to drive the strategy

Culture should be higher up the agenda for the Council

The strategy should address how existing assets can be better utilised

The Council should facilitate rather than deliver cultural activity

Make Halton a destination for culture (currently people are going to Liverpool etc.)

Lack of opportunities for young people

Need for accessible platforms for local artists

Loss of skills in the sector due to covid

Need to change the perception of Halton within residents – generate pride in what goes on in their communities

Raising aspirations and celebrating achievements with annual events

Visitor economy and culture should work together

The river is a barrier to people coming to things – activity needs to be spread across the borough

‘Transport Poverty’ in the borough needs to be addressed

Brindley – there is an appetite for more ambitious programming at The Brindley

### Themes from Public Consultation

People don’t know what’s happening or where to look to find out

High demand for workshops and classes for all ages

Appreciation of outdoor green spaces

People going outside the borough for cultural activity

Food and drink options wanted alongside cultural activity

Lack of public transport is a barrier

Concern around growing population and core services

Lack of opportunities for young people

Community centres could be utilised for culture

Lack of ambition from public when asked for ideas – lack of stimulation and inspiration

Demand for arthouse type cinema

Dedicated spaces for buskers desired

Widnes town centre not appealing

Words 'culture' and 'heritage' could be a barrier

Programming at the Brindley not appealing to all

Opportunities needed for local artists – low-cost access to equipment, spaces, exhibition opportunities

Demand for multi-use cultural space in Widnes

Council should facilitate not lead on culture

Dedicated role at the Council to oversee culture

## **Common themes:**

- A role for the Borough Council in facilitating cultural activity, supporting local groups more to achieve their aims. A closer working partnership between the Borough Council and local organisations
- Lack of opportunities for young people
- Need to raise aspirations and ambition for culture in the Borough
- A need for more opportunities and platforms for artists
- Transport is a barrier to attending cultural activity and events
- Ambition for more ambitious and diverse programming at The Brindley



## Proposals

Our ideas for the key areas that Halton needs to address to strengthen its cultural sector are:

### 1. Leadership and coordination

- It is clear that there are partnership and network groups in Halton that have ambition and enthusiasm, however they are looking to the Borough Council for steer and facilitation to enable them to achieve their activities. A facilitation role for support and open communication, with close partnership working, will be looked at.
- Cultural activity supports a number of the Borough's other agendas including regeneration, wellbeing, skills development and young people, and Visitor Economy. Therefore, leadership needs to be developed that brings together those that represent these areas to form a Culture Group, with high level leadership at HBC, to drive coordinated developments for culture.

### 2. Communication

- A really strong campaign to communicate Halton's cultural assets and vibrancy is required. The campaign needs to achieve a number of things: to change the local perception of Halton and create a feeling in residents that Halton is buzzing with cultural opportunities that are high quality; to market Halton as a cultural destination to contribute towards the Visitor Economy, making use of its cultural assets and unique heritage as a draw for visitors to the Borough; to enable local people to easily find a wide range of cultural offers for them to be involved with, with a central place for information where they can find out What's On: this requires coordination across the cultural sector of Halton, linking to the groups and networks discussed above; it also requires a high profile campaign to raise awareness of where this central information can be accessed.

### 3. Diversity of programming, to achieve diversity of audiences and participants

- Consider outdoor events and festival activity that are accessible to all residents and visitors to Halton.
- Ensure equity of opportunity across both sides of the river.
- Create targeted programmes for young people, involving young people's voices in the decision making.
- Create opportunities for local organisations to "Go and See" projects and activities outside the Borough to support them in connecting with more diverse cultural activities, inspire them, develop networks and new ideas that can be brought back to the Borough for Halton's benefit.

### 4. Celebration, inspiration, aspiration

- Using outdoor spaces. A strategy for encouraging the use of outdoor space for cultural activity, festivals, events and daily activities such as busking or spoken word performance. Outdoor space is accessible to most people and will help to break down barriers to attending culture, help to introduce new forms of arts to new audiences, contribute towards vibrant town centres and parks which will support the Visitor Economy as well as make Halton a more attractive place for people to live and work. Using outdoor spaces can also provide more opportunities for young people and artists to have a platform for their work. This supports them to develop their skills and experience in their artform.

- Festivals that celebrate the achievements and creativity of Halton's people, and its unique heritage. Events such as the Borough of Culture programme, outdoor festivals and civic events, HPAN's schools' annual performance and exhibitions, and local organisations' activities such as MakeFest should be supported better by media and coordinated marketing, to raise awareness and aspiration. Events should include opportunities to platform local artists and there could be new festival events and heritage projects devised that celebrate unique Halton.





# THE CRUCIBLE OF CULTURE

The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough



**CRUCIBLE** *noun*



**CULTURE** *noun*

The collective expression of human creativity and imagination, shaped by the values and beliefs of a society, and reflected in its art, music, literature and other creative works.

## Our Culture Commitment

Halton Borough Council is committed to ensuring that our borough is a place in which culture thrives and is nurtured. As a local authority, Halton will be the enabling force for the transformative change which the **Crucible of Culture** is founded upon.

Our commitment is highlighted throughout this Vision; here we put our names to that commitment. The **Crucible of Culture** will grow ever brighter as a result of this support for our borough's cultural and creative sector.

**Councillor Mike Wharton**  
Leader of the Council

**Stephen Young**  
Chief Executive





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## **The Crucible of Culture: The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough**

### **Foreword**

When asked to write this foreword, I was reminded that writing is in itself an act of cultural engagement. The novel on the bedside table, the reference books on the library shelves, the diary we keep; all these are cultural touchstones, moments when humans interact with their own thoughts and those of others.

Culture is a difficult word to pin down. As a word, it can be where you are from, your beliefs, how you live your life. Here, it means the creative activity which engages you, which delights you, which makes your heart sing, or which – for a fortunate few – is what you do for a living.

Those who work in culture know its power. They know how a well-timed line in a pantomime can cause an audience to double over in laughter. They know how a song lyric about unrequited love can resonate with the listener's own experiences. That a musician playing a riff can induce instinctive toe-tapping. That an object or image from the past can help bring understanding to the present. That an artwork can provide hundreds of years of pleasure hanging on a wall of the homes of countless families. That a TV series can capture the attention of millions around the globe.

In Halton, culture is all these things and more. It is your local theatre, your local museum, your community venue, your library, your child's school, your local pub's live music slot... and many more. I know that culture, creativity and heritage are important to all those who call Halton home and to those who visit our borough. This vision sets out Halton Borough Council's ambitions for the borough's cultural sector: as a local authority, we will work productively with cultural partners, funders and communities to deliver ambitious, innovative and dynamic creative activity with a strong link to Halton's past, present and future.

We find ourselves in a period of economic uncertainty, with a cost of living crisis and the continued impact of Covid. Culture was a constant companion for many through the pandemic, and remains a source of the 'feel good' moments in life for us all, boosting mental and physical wellbeing, bringing people together and providing escapism from the realities of our current circumstances.

Despite these challenges, the period ahead brings bold and dynamic opportunities. A new library, an extension to the Borough's theatre and development for local creative industries and organisations. In 2024, Halton will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, whilst 2026 sees the return of Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture to Halton.

I look forward to seeing this vision evolve, and to the delivery of a diverse portfolio of cultural activity that engages residents and visitors, and cements Halton as the **crucible of culture**. Our shared ambition is for Haltonians to step out of their doors and be met by world-class culture.

**Cllr Paul Nolan**

*Executive Board Member - Employment, Learning & Skills, Community & Culture*

## **The Crucible of Culture: The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough**

### **Context**

2021 brought the Liverpool City Region's Borough of Culture to Halton. Much-awaited, this was Halton's moment to bring the region's cultural focus to this borough. This borough has always been culturally alive. It's a place which acts as a **crucible of culture**, a nod to the borough's industrial roots, bringing together creative people, ideas, ambitions and dreams in response to a rich seam of heritage, creativity and sheer dynamism.

There is recognition that culture is a transformative power, providing change for the better and opportunities for improvements in health, education and the economy. Halton is stronger with culture, and a stronger cultural sector has the ability to unlock the full cultural and creative potential of this proud and vibrant place.

This Vision has been informed by the consultation and resulting cultural strategy report, undertaken by Art Reach in 2022. The report was commissioned as Halton's response to the Borough of Culture successes and the desire by the local authority to build a legacy for the Borough of Culture year and to ensure Halton is a place in which cultural thrives and is championed.

**The Crucible of Culture: The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough** is accompanied by an Action Plan, which sets out the pathway for future cultural development and growth across the borough.

Halton Borough comprises of the two towns of Runcorn and Widnes, surrounded by smaller communities, each with their own identity. These communities include the civic parishes of Daresbury, Hale, Halebank, Moore, Preston Brook and Sandymoor. Since 2014, the unitary authority of Halton has been part of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Whilst the global pandemic tempered the aspirations which the Borough of Culture brought, it did not alter the desire for change. A change in how culture is perceived and in where it sits. Culture HQ, based in one of the borough's key shopping centres, provided a literal shop window for culture, breaking down barriers and taking cultural excellence into the high street: quite simply, connecting everyday people with a cultural touchpoint during moments of everyday interactions.

Culture HQ provided residents with a magical Mr. Benn moment; an opportunity to step into the world of culture, feeling immersed and engaged with the experience and being empowered to feel *part* of that world. It's an everyday experience which should become the norm. Culture on the street corner. Culture created in Halton, by Halton's own, the product of our own **crucible of culture**.

This crucible, once lit, continues to burn. It burns brighter now as the legacy from the Borough of Culture continues.

This **crucible of culture** forms the bright centre of this Vision.



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The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough**

We invite you to join Halton's journey to ensure that bright centre burns ever brighter as we reposition culture as a powerful force for positive change, personal growth and wellbeing, and economic success.

**Our Vision**

Halton is a **crucible of culture**, at a point of change. In this borough, run through by the mighty Mersey, culture thrives. The guardians of culture are venues, partner organisations and regular festivals and celebrations which populate this diverse and innovative borough. People value culture, engage with culture and, through culture, celebrate the richness of Haltonian ambition.

Heritage has forged the borough and the stories borne from the shared history of residents, past, present and future, continue to shape and influence creative outputs. Our history continues to shape our lives and is reflected throughout the cultural landscape.

Through our cultural aspirations, ignited by the Liverpool City Region's Borough of Culture in 2021, we can improve health and wellbeing, build sustainability into the economy and champion the 'feel good' moments. This is Halton's land, this is the story of proud communities looking for a more positive, more vibrant and more diverse future.

The Vision reflects the sense of strong community, heritage, self-starting creativity and collaborative working that exists in Halton. The combination of these factors forms the foundation from which to realise the full cultural potential of Halton. More than a neighbouring borough of the City of Liverpool, Halton has huge potential to become a cultural destination in its own right.

The Borough of Culture showed what was possible. It demonstrated what could be achieved. Even against the backdrop of a global pandemic, culture shone through as an undimmed light in Halton Borough. This vision for culture capitalises on that, it defines and promotes new and existing strategic partnerships, and in so doing increases the likelihood of securing larger amounts of funding, such as from Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Culture can be analogue, for example, the word on the page, the object in a museum case, the performance on the stage. It can also be digital, such as an augmented reality installation, a virtual museum, or a heritage Facebook page. Whatever its form, it is always about people: social connections and opportunities, sharing and (lifelong) learning, better understanding about us and our place in the world.

**Our Vision is to establish Halton as the **crucible of culture**, bringing together elements of excellence to create a new, vibrant cultural economy, improving health and wellbeing for residents and visitors alike, whilst building a strong economic platform and creative opportunities for all.**

Set against an industrial past, Halton is a collection of proud and dynamic communities,

## **The Crucible of Culture: The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough**

studded with cultural excellence and bold creative aspirations. The cultural canvas of the borough reveals theatre, music, heritage, visual arts and performing arts. It brings together professionals, amateurs, volunteers and audiences to create a rich seam of opportunity and talent. These are the elements which when freed to achieve their potential will combine to create something new. Something bright. Something magical. Something Halton.

This is our commitment, as a local authority, to connect organisations at all levels, to help forge new partnerships and to champion culture at every opportunity. This is our crucible. These are our people. Halton's culture is for everybody. We invite people from across the sector and beyond to join us on a journey which will take us to the next Borough of Culture in 2026 and onto 2030, when the Vision will be reviewed.

We will work to enable our cultural sector to become a shining light in this crucible of change, which will draw in new audiences and build on the strong foundations which already exist in the borough. We have identified four priorities, the Elements of Culture, which when combined will create new programmes of activity and opportunities for our children and young people, right through to our most experienced residents.

### **Introducing the Four Elements of Culture**

These elements have been established through consultation with Halton's Cultural Sector and together provide the basis for a new way of working between Halton Borough Council and those organisations, be they professional, amateur, or volunteer-led, which form the bedrock of the Borough's vibrant cultural sector.

#### **The First Element**

**Leadership:** Providing a conduit between Halton Borough Council and the Borough's Cultural Sector to maximise opportunities and establish culture as a cross-cutting priority that forms a golden thread through the Council's different agendas.

#### **The Second Element**

**Communication:** To increase awareness of cultural opportunities and activities in Halton, both with residents and with visitors. Halton has an active cultural sector, the vibrancy and impact of which can only be enhanced through heightened public awareness.

#### **The Third Element**

**Diversity:** To ensure programming speaks to the widest possible audience, providing a voice and a creative space for everyone, whilst raising aspiration and providing talent and skill development opportunities for all ages.

#### **The Fourth Element**

**Dynamism:** To enable aspiration, ambition and creative excellence to flourish across the Borough, through supporting bold and energetic programming at a Borough-wide level, showcasing creative confidence at the heart of the **crucible of culture**.

## **The Crucible of Culture: The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough**

These Four Elements are not complete on their own. Alongside the **Four Elements of Culture** sits Funding, the **Agent of Change**.

### **The Agent of Change**

**Funding:** The Four Elements of Culture require a unifying factor to bond them together and bring about change. That bond is provided by Funding. For change to happen in Halton's **Crucible of Culture**, funding is necessary... it is the 'agent of change', and the Four Elements are the enabling forces that will support the unlocking of external funding to deliver the ambition outlined in this Vision.

### **Leadership:**

#### **The First Element of Culture**

This Vision establishes Halton Borough Council as the enabler of cultural change in the borough. The value of culture and of the borough's active and successful cultural sector is recognised and championed at the highest levels, by both the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council. Together, these two roles will work to raise awareness of the power of culture to improve both mental and physical wellbeing and to grow Halton's economic sector, bringing in more jobs and more opportunities.

Two posts will sit alongside existing Council departments to directly engage with the Cultural Sector. These are an Events post and a Cultural Officer post. Together, these roles will support the sector in delivery of key annual events and festivals and in forging deeper connections, both within and outside the sector. The Cultural Officer role will also provide a bridge between the sector and external funding bodies to maximise the flow of cultural investment into the Borough.

Leadership also resides within the sector itself, through Cultivate and Halton Heritage Partnership (HHP). Cultivate comprises of a number of professional-led organisations and includes Council representation, whilst HHP represents over 20 volunteer-led heritage organisations.

Through strong leadership, culture will thrive, providing everybody, across the borough and beyond, with the opportunity to enjoy world-class cultural activities which have been forged in Halton, the **Crucible of Culture**.

#### **Our Leadership Commitment**

- To be advocates for Halton's Cultural Sector at all levels and to embed culture in the council as a part of statutory services, including Education, Economic Development and Health.
- To ensure Halton has a voice both within and outside of the region and with key funding bodies.
- To support and champion leadership from within the cultural sector, with the council acting in a facilitatory capacity, enabling Halton's cultural sector to be self-sufficient,

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through providing quality venues and facilities, alongside strong cultural connections.

**Communication:  
The Second Element of Culture**

Communication is central to the success of this Vision. With increasing levels of cultural activity across the borough, comes a call to raise awareness of, and engagement levels in, creative opportunities for all.

Within this element is a recognition that communication is not only about levels of engagement as audiences, but also as participants. Halton is alive with opportunities for creatives to produce and curate work, be they professionals or amateurs, younger or more senior. But it runs deeper than that. Awareness of opportunities for skills development, to give something back, to be socially – and culturally – connected are all part of the canvas which communication must cover. Our vibrant cultural sector relies on volunteers to bring added value, to share passions for art and heritage and to be actively involved in the vibrancy of the Haltonian cultural landscape.

Here, communication means raising awareness of opportunities for engagement in cultural and creative opportunities at every level, a call to action for us all, for everyone, everywhere to hear the clarion call and to be part of the **crucible of culture** as individual elements: a part of the whole, a part of Halton's creative picture.

Working with Cultivate and HHP, Halton Borough Council will ensure that culture in Halton is visible as never before. That people know how, where and when they can be involved, and that audiences for cultural activities grow. Those same audiences will be encouraged to be 'Culture Champions' sharing experiences with friends and families in person and through their own social media accounts using the #CrucibleOfCulture and #HaltonHighlights tags to unite their stories and experiences.

**Our Communication Commitment**

- To establish recognised 'go to' places for cultural activities across Halton, uniting people with opportunities to be engaged and to capitalise on visitor economy programmes of work, including Visit Halton.
- To promote opportunities for volunteering to enhance and grow the cultural sector, whilst also ensuring the amateur sector is included in the conversation.
- To encourage our residents and visitors to be active engagers and 'Culture Champions', using their own social media accounts and our dedicated hashtags to champion the cultural activities they have engaged with and enjoyed.

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**Diversity:  
The Third Element of Culture**

The bold vision outlined here is for everyone, everywhere to access culture. It's about sharing Halton's creative capital with residents, but also welcoming people into our Borough to share our artistic ambition and our Halton highlights. We all need a stage, a place to create, a platform from which to share. From the everyday sharing of stories over a pint in the pub, to watching a world-class performance in the theatre, each of us has a moment when we shine. We become our own **crucibles of culture**, adding bright spots and moments of inspiration to Halton's creative canvas.

We are also each different. The cultural activities we enjoy is varied. The places we come from are different. Our needs as individuals flex and change over time. This individual and collective diversity matters. We represent different genders, abilities, ethnicities, sexual preferences and religious beliefs. We may rely on technology to improve our vision or hearing, we may use wheelchairs or have 'unseen' differences, such as being autistic. Our differences should unite us as humans. We are all the same.

The **crucible of culture** in Halton reflects this. Through accessible performances and exhibitions, and equality of opportunity for all creatives, we will build a fully inclusive cultural canvas which reflects the diversity of us as individuals. Our programme will be rich and varied, from small intimate experiences to stadium-filling concerts, and from community co-created installations to internationally recognised performances, our culture will speak for everyone. Our approach will ensure equity of treatment for all.

The power of culture to support mental and physical wellbeing is recognised, via social prescribing, combatting social isolation, enjoying shared experiences, creating artwork, giving something back as a volunteer, or learning and developing new skills. Culture does all these things: our vision ensures this contribution is recognised and championed.

We will champion opportunities for skill and talent development, reaching out to children and young people to provide experiences and opportunities in their own communities: our talent will be home-grown, nurtured through the **crucible of culture**. Our Vision will ensure programming speaks to the widest possible audience, providing a voice and a creative space for everyone, whilst raising aspiration and providing talent and skill development opportunities for all ages.

**Our Diversity Commitment**

- To actively support a cultural canvas which is inclusive in content, form and messaging. In the **crucible of culture** everyone is welcome to play a part, either on the stage, in the wings or in the audience. Halton's culture is for everyone, now and always.

## **The Crucible of Culture: The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough**

- To listen to the needs of our cultural sector partners and organisations and ensure cultural interventions are a central part of the borough's strategy for improved health and wellbeing for all residents.
- To work with our educators, at all levels, to ensure access is readily available for children and young people throughout their development, from Early Years sessions in libraries to opportunities to perform and showcase work and talent, developing integrated lifelong learning through cultural endeavours.

## **Dynamism: The Fourth Element of Culture**

Our vision is bold, dynamic and innovative. The programming that the **crucible of culture** inspires will be energetic and will showcase the creative confidence which runs through the sector. Our cultural canvas is varied, with a network of venues and spaces in which to create, to perform, to animate.

We know Halton's creative sector is up to the challenge and is keen to be part of a step change in the role culture plays in the Borough. Through Cultivate and HHP members, combined with Liverpool City Region programmes and Halton Borough Council's own strategic direction, we will ensure culture is at the centre of Halton's success. In the **crucible of culture**, we will provide the spark to start the change.

We will support the growth of the sector through external funding opportunities, through conversations at regional and national levels and we will share the ambitions of the cultural sector. Creative platforms within Halton will be opened up, bringing vibrancy to the sector and supporting health and wellbeing outcomes through those touched by the programme.

Through nurturing creative excellence, the cultural sector will build sustainability, becoming a 'go to place' for those seeking quality experiences. Those seekers of experience will, in turn, support a vibrant cultural economy, helping grow businesses and attract new investment into the borough. Building quality 'doorstep' cultural and creative opportunities for residents creates a desirable place to live and a place to set up new businesses and attract new workforces. Our ambition is that no one in Halton should be more than 10 minutes from a cultural event or experience.

Together with the sector, we will celebrate accidental interactions with culture, alongside those long-awaited, venue-filling performances. Our audiences will be on the edge of their seats as they lose themselves in the creative products of Halton's **crucible of culture**.

### **Our Dynamism Commitment**

- To commit to ongoing consultation with the cultural sector and to work together to unlock new opportunities.

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- To support the sector to unlock external funding to continue to increase quality creative output which delivers the step-change the sector is so keen to achieve.
- To ensure the **crucible of culture** is at the centre of wider strategic planning, using innovative creative interventions to capitalise on the 'soft power' of culture to grow the economy and support mental and physical wellbeing.

**Funding:  
The Agent of Change**

In the **crucible of culture**, an enabling force is needed to spark or trigger the reaction between the elements. That 'agent of change' is funding. The cultural sector needs funding to be sustainable and resilient. Funding can come from two main sources: trading income and non-trading income. Trading income is that which is earned, whilst non-trading income comprises grants, sponsorship and donations.

Non-trading income can be used to build resilience and to grow trading income. For many cultural practitioners, trading income comes from fees and / or ticket sales. Halton's cultural sector has in the past received lower levels of non-trading income from external funding bodies than the national average.

The borough has enjoyed success in grant applications headed by Halton Borough Council, and using the Four Elements of Culture, the success rate of applications from cultural organisations in the borough will increase. Those organisations will grow in confidence and ambition, as the demand grows from residents and visitors to the borough alike. With more activity taking place, in more spaces and more frequently, the desire for quality creative installations and performances will grow.

With increased external funding success comes greater activity: the **crucible of culture** becomes more active, vibrant, hotter. As the critical mass of culture grows, so do opportunities for increased inward investment.

Key external funding partners within the cultural arena include Art Fund, Arts Council England (ACE), Clore Duffield Foundation, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Foyle Foundation, National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and Theatres Trust.

**Our Funding commitment**

- Halton Borough Council's Programmes Office and Community Development Team will work with local organisations, including at grass root level, to facilitate and secure funding to allow cultural growth across the borough to be nurtured.
- A dedicated officer will lead on Halton's Visitor Economy, ensuring that culture and cultural activity is a key driver within the visitor economy.

## The Crucible of Culture: The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough

- The Council will engage with key funding bodies, sharing the **Crucible of Culture** and its aspirations and raising awareness of the need for cultural investment within Halton to realise this ambition.

### What next?

As a new cultural sector grows in the centre of old Runcorn, bringing theatre, library and creative partner organisations closer together, plans for a cultural quarter in Widnes will be considered. Using the stoic Victorian architecture of the old Town Hall, the Kingsway buildings and St Paul's Church as physical markers, this area has huge potential as a cultural quarter, and a twin to the development planned in Runcorn.

With a stronger and increasingly vibrant cultural sector comes new opportunities, attracting inward investment and developing the visitor economy. In this place, forged of industry and canal-crossed, emerges a new industry of creative innovation and excellence. Born of the **crucible of culture**, this new-found drive and determination will enhance and enrich the borough. As cultural sector sustainability grows, so too will that of the wider economy. Culturally richer and financially richer.

The council will work to ensure that money being spent on regeneration and facilities improvements are coordinated through a Culture Group headed by Cultivate and its representatives. The council will have a role within the Culture Group and will forge a new way of working between the council, private sector and third sector organisations, establishing a cultural partnership delivery model.

A new Culture Officer post will be recruited to by the council, underlining local authority commitment to this Vision and cementing Halton's place as the **crucible of culture**. Alongside this, a cultural action plan has been developed, the delivery of which will be central to the translation from cultural ambition on the page, to cultural reality in Halton's communities. The action plan, which sits alongside this Vision, will be a live document, adapting to community aspiration and need and working in tandem with the priorities of the Vision.

Halton's aspirations include growing the number of National Portfolio Organisations in the borough and looking to other Arts Council England programmes, such as Creative People and Places to deliver the necessary step change to the borough's cultural programming. As part of the Let's Create vision identified by Arts Council England, the **crucible of culture** is well-placed to capitalise on delivery of bold, innovative and dynamic content.

In finding places for cultural work to exist, the concept of spaces or 'community crucibles' emerges. As culture becomes a transformative force in the borough, Halton Borough Council will become a facilitator, or cultural broker, between arts groups and organisations and those who hold the keys to underused spaces, be they commercial or community spaces. There is a clear need for the establishment of exhibition and performance spaces,



## **The Crucible of Culture: The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough**

but also for start-up spaces and meeting spaces for groups, especially those from the voluntary and amateur sectors.

Halton's children and young people represent the future of the borough. Through digital media, their connections with culture sit in their hands in a way previous generations could only have dreamt of. For them, providing real world experiences, 'hands-on' rather than 'hand-held', are key. Young people need physical stages, exhibition and performance spaces, volunteer and skills development opportunities and a voice to shape what happens in their own communities. Working with education providers at all levels, from Early Years through to college level, this will be a clear priority: the **crucible of culture** starts in the formative years and becomes a lifelong engagement.

### **Accountability**

The success of the vision relies on a transformation in the way in which culture is both perceived and delivered in the borough. This vision establishes culture as an enabler of positive change. Halton Borough Council will provide the impetus for this change, working with an already engaged and active sector.

The **crucible of culture** relies on the Four Elements of Culture being supported and adopted by all who are invested in this vision. When the Four Elements are brought together, the opportunities to secure meaningful levels of funding (the Agent of Change) increase greatly.

Accountability to deliver on this ambition sits firstly with Halton Borough Council, as owner of the vision and the driver of the aspirations laid out within this document. This is a partnership delivery model, so that accountability will also be carried by organisations such as Cultivate and HHP.

Halton Borough Council's intention to facilitate and drive cultural change and growth is underlined by its commitments, as defined here in **The Crucible of Culture: The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough**, which includes investment in a new Cultural Officer post and the ownership of the Borough's cultural Action Plan. The local authority also has a key enabling role to play in the realisation of the Agent of Change, Funding, for the Borough's vibrant and dynamic cultural sector.

In the wider cultural landscape of the borough, that accountability, that drive for excellence, dynamism and creativity also sits with the organisations which together form the **crucible of culture**, the venues, the organisations, the volunteer and amateur groups, the participants and the audiences.

### **Acknowledgements**

There is more information about Halton's cultural DNA at [visithalton.co.uk](http://visithalton.co.uk), the Visit Halton website.

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To be part of our ambition and find out more about the Crucible of Culture, visit [cultivatehalton.co.uk](https://cultivatehalton.co.uk), to discover the organisations which together form part of Halton's cultural forum, Cultivate.

To share your own experiences and photographs of Halton's cultural highlights as 'Culture Champions' on social media platforms, please use our hashtags **#CrucibleOfCulture** and **#HaltonHighlights**.

**The Crucible of Culture: The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough** has been authored for Halton Borough Council, by Rob Sanderson-Thomas, Chief Executive of Norton Priory Museum and Gardens, in conjunction with representatives of Halton's cultural sector.

**Cover image:** *Devine Fire*, installation by AndNow. October 2021. Photographer: Paul Quigley

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| <b>REPORT TO:</b>         | Executive Board                               |
| <b>DATE:</b>              | 20 April 2023                                 |
| <b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b> | Operational Director – Community & Greenspace |
| <b>PORTFOLIO:</b>         | Employment, Learning, Skills and Community    |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>           | Brindley Theatre Extension                    |
| <b>WARDS:</b>             | Boroughwide                                   |

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update members on the progress made with the project and seek approval to go out to tender and award the contract.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board**

- 1) approves the utilisation of £5,608,613 of the Town Deal funding for the Brindley Theatre Extension;**
- 2) approves the tendering of the project and gives delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Employment, Learning, Skills and Community to take all reasonable steps to award the contract to the successful contractor; and**
- 3) authorises the submission of external funding bids to support the delivery of the project, where necessary.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Runcorn Old Town Investment Plan (ROTIP) was reported to Executive Board on 14 April 2022 (EXB91). Since that time, the Council has secured Town Deal Funding of £23.6m. The Brindley is one of 7 projects to improve Runcorn Old Town and has received £6,606,231 in total. The Brindley project is split into two phases, the Brindley Theatre Extension £5,608,612 and the development of the Brindley Green £997,618.
- 3.2 The Brindley Theatre Extension includes an architectural glazed extension to the front of the building, which will become home to a new library and café/restaurant. The proposals for the outdoor Brindley Green complements the Brindley Theatre Extension and will provide opportunities for outdoor performances/activities, as well as a café terrace and informal seating areas. The area will provide easier pedestrian

- connections between the Brindley and town centre. The Brindley Green was reported in full to Executive Board on 16 June 2022 (EXB10).
- 3.3 The Council intends to procure a contractor via The Chest Procurement Portal in liaison with Property Services and Procurement, to ensure value for money and compliance with Procurement Standing Orders. The current estimate for the Brindley Theatre Extension remains within budget and is under constant review. If opportunities arise for further external funding, either to close a future gap or to enhance the project or existing building further, this will be pursued.
  - 3.4 The planning application for the project was submitted in August 2022. Following feedback from consultees, amended plans and information have been submitted in March 2023. A decision is expected by the end of April 2023. Two representations have been received from members of the public, one in support and one raising a number of issues, all of which will be taken into consideration as part of the assessment. The initial objection from the Highways Authority has been addressed and since removed based on the amended plans and information. Consultee responses are still awaited from the Council's Drainage Officers and the Environment Agency. Once these comments have been received, and assuming there are no objections raised, the application can be determined under delegated authority.
  - 3.5 The anticipated duration of the Brindley Theatre Extension works is 51 weeks. The Brindley will remain open during this period. The Brindley's peak period is the Christmas pantomime. In order to avoid this period, the contractor will be asked to commence on site on Monday 8 January 2024. The construction period will be reviewed with the successful contractor with a view to completing the works early December 2024.
  - 3.6 The Brindley will lose the existing Education room as part of the extension to make way for a changing places facility and toilets to serve the café/restaurant. As such we have identified capital funding to replace the Education room including £240,000 from the Town Deal Funding ring-fenced to support the Brindley manager. A further £66,000 from UK Shared Prosperity Fund Culture Strand and will repurpose some of the £275,000 allocation for the Studio improvements. The Education room will be replaced without impacting on the project budget. The education room is a source of income for the Brindley and given the increased floor space, it is important to maximize income generation to offset the increased running costs.
  - 3.7 The Council is in positive discussions with Peel (who own the Bridgewater Canal) to make temporary alterations to the tow path to allow safe access for all customers during the works. If/when agreement is reached with Peel, the alteration works will commence, which could be as early as summer 2023. If Peel are unable to support the request, the tow path, which is

open to all members of the public currently, will still be used, but we will need to provide an increased stewarding presence.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Brindley Theatre Extension will allow greater access to the Brindley for the community, creating more space within the building and the relocation of the library. It is also an anchor for the Town Deal project as a whole.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The funding for the project has been secured and the project remains within budget. If costs increase, further external funding will be sought.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

There are no implications associated with this report.

##### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

The Brindley will continue to offer employment and upskill technical and customer services staff, through on site practical application.

##### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

Increasing the opportunities for local people and providing access to local facilities and employment, will increase the opportunities for healthier living.

##### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

- 7.0 Advice has been sought from the Counter Terrorism Policing Northwest on the extension and the existing building and taking into account the Protect Duty.

##### **7.1 Halton's Urban Renewal**

This project underpins the good work of the Town Deal Board and will act as a key anchor in the regeneration of the Old Town.

#### **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 There is a risk of cost escalation exceeding the budget, Arcadis have been appointed as cost consultant and working with us, will keep monitoring the situation. Until we tender the project, this will remain a risk. As already mentioned, we will look to plug any gaps with additional external funding and only come back to the Council for funding as a last resort.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 An equality impact consultation was undertaken in 2022 and the comments received have been considered.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The Council is working closely with the architect to minimise carbon emissions on the project. When considering the strategy for Minimising carbon Emissions a ‘fabric first’ approach should be followed with a hierarchy of –

**Minimise energy demand >> Maximise energy efficiency >> Utilise renewable energy >> Utilise low carbon energy >> Utilise other energy sources**

| <b>Minimise Energy Demand</b>   | <b>Maximise Energy Efficiency</b>  | <b>Utilise Low and Zero Carbon Technologies</b>   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passive Design Techniques</li> <li>• High quality materials and construction methods to reduce the inherent carbon content</li> <li>• Good Daylight Factors</li> <li>• Building Envelope Insulation</li> <li>• Optimal Glass Area &amp; Specification</li> <li>• Building Air Tightness</li> <li>• Natural Ventilation Strategy where possible</li> <li>• Energy Sub-Metering minimum of 90% to be assigned to an end use</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Efficiency Lamps and Luminaires</li> <li>• Lighting Local Switching Zones</li> <li>• Lighting Control Incorporating Presence Detection and Daylight Linked Dimming</li> <li>• Optimized Plant Controls</li> <li>• Local Control Zones for Heating and Cooling</li> <li>• Variable Speed Drives</li> <li>• Low Flow Taps</li> <li>• Water Leak Detection</li> <li>• Automatic Controls</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renewable energy sources.</li> <li>• Low / Zero Carbon Energy Sources</li> </ul> |

As part of the Building Services design the following aspects have been considered and have been included:-

### **Minimising Energy Demand**

- **Passive Design Techniques / Good Daylight Factors / Optimal Glass Area & Specification**

Cooling is to be provided to the majority of occupied areas.

Extensive thermal modelling was utilised to consider how to minimise heat gains, the glazing area has been optimised to balance heat gains, daylight levels and aesthetic impact.

- **Building Envelope Insulation**

Thermal modelling of the building fabric has been undertaken to inform the design and minimise energy use

When considered against Building Regulations Part L minimum:-

- wall performance has been improved by approximately 30%
- roof performance has been improved by approximately 17%
- spandrel panel performance has been improved by approximately 70%

- **Building Air Tightness**

The targeted air performance for the building is 3 m<sup>3</sup>/h/m<sup>2</sup>, which is a 62% improvement against the Building Regulations Part L minimum.

- **Energy Sub-Metering minimum of 90% to be assigned to an end use**

Extensive metering is to be provided to allow the building management to monitor energy usage within different areas.

Energy metering is to be provided to allow 90 % of the fuel usage to be assigned, specialist functions and high energy equipment will be metered

As part of the BMS installation an automatic meter reading and data collection facility is to be provided to assist in the management in reviewing energy usage.

### **Maximising Energy Efficiency**

- **High Efficiency Lamps and Luminaires**

All areas are to be provided with high efficiency long life LED lighting.

Light outputs are to be excess of 110 luminaire lumens / circuit Watt.

- **Lighting Local Switching Zones**

In conjunction with automatic controls, local occupancy control is to be provided to smaller occupied spaces to allow occupants to locally adjust the space lighting.

- **Lighting Control Incorporating Presence Detection and Daylight Linked Dimming**

Within circulation and store areas presence detection is to be provided

Fittings are to be provided with dimmable ballast to enable daylight dimming to the Bar / Café / Restaurant areas.

- **Optimized Plant Controls**

Systems are to be provided with night set back and demand control, smaller occupied spaces can be arranged to provide operation only when in use, while larger spaces will be optimised to match general opening times.

Ventilation systems will be demand controlled based on CO<sub>2</sub> values within the space.

- **Local Control Zones for Heating and Cooling**

Heating (and cooling) units are to be zoned to allow local control.

Smaller areas are to be treated as a single zone, while larger spaces are to have multiple zones.

Each zone is to be provided with temperature and time control.

Where areas have heating and cooling, temperatures settings will incorporate a dead band between lower and upper control temperatures.

- **Variable Speed Drives**

Air Handling Units are to be provided with CO<sub>2</sub> demand control with fans speed controlled to match demand.

Heating pumps are to be provided with variable speed drives in conjunction with 2 port valves to minimise pumping energy.



- **Low Flow Taps**

Taps are to be provided with local flow control to minimise water usage.

- **Automatic Controls**

Automatic controls and metering are to be provided associated with the M&E services installations.

The system will include: -

- Full automated control of all systems
- Controls to minimise and optimise energy usage.
- The ability to set time schedules to meet the required occupancy periods.
- Reporting of energy usage

### **Utilise Low and Zero Carbon Technologies**

- **Renewable energy sources**

Consideration has been given to the installation of renewable energy systems.

PV has been installed on the existing building with a total output of 25 kWp.

- **Low / Zero Carbon Energy Sources**

A wet heating system is to be installed to serve underfloor heating and window line trench heating, the wet heating is to be served via an air to water heat pump.

General AHUs are to be provided with DX heat pump heating/cooling coils.

Within the main open plan areas energy efficient VRF heat pumps are being installed.

## **10. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**None within the meaning of the Act**

|                           |   |
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| <b>DATE:</b>              | 20 April 2023                                   |
| <b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b> | Operational Director - Community & Greenspace   |
| <b>PORTFOLIO:</b>         | Environment and Urban Renewal                   |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>           | Creation of Café Facility at Pickerings Pasture |
| <b>WARD(S)</b>            | Ditton, Hale Village and Halebank               |

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek approval to provide a café facility at Pickerings Pasture Local Nature Reserve (LNR), which would be operated as a franchise.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That;**

- 2.1 (i) **The proposal to open a café facility at Pickerings Pasture Local Nature Reserve which would be operated as a franchise opportunity, as outlined within the report, be approved;**
- (ii) **Council be asked to include £520,000 within the Council's Capital Programme to fund the construction of the café facility.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Pickerings Pasture LNR is one of the Council's busiest public parks. Located on the banks of the River Mersey it offers spectacular views of the Mersey Estuary in a green and pleasant environment. The popular Trans-Pennine Trail route also passes through the site.
- 3.2 Currently there is a portacabin type of facility located on site which has public toilets and meeting rooms. The facility has been there for more than 30 years and is in poor condition. It is currently used by the Friends of Pickerings Pasture who open it as and when they can.
- 3.3 Pre-Covid, the Friends of Pickerings Pasture operated a pop up café in the portacabin building which was popular with the visiting public. The venture was operated by volunteers and opening times could not be guaranteed. Discussions were held with the Friends of

Pickerings Pasture with regards to the creation of a new café building and they are supportive of the idea.

- 3.4 The Council is contacted regularly by third parties who want to operate a café facility at Pickerings Pasture LNR.
- 3.5 In the knowledge that the portacabin facility was coming to the end of its expected life, two years ago Property Services were asked to look at options for creating a café facility at Pickerings Pasture LNR. A design was created (see appendix 1) with some indicative costs. As the Covid pandemic was still ongoing there was no progression at that time.
- 3.6 The demand for a café and the interest by third parties to provide one did not go away. The Operational Director (Community & Greenspace) was asked to look at ways in which a café facility might be delivered.
- 3.7 The café facility as proposed (appendix 1) is estimated to cost £520,000. If £520,000 was provided from the Capital Programme and was funded over seven years, the capital financing cost would be £87,500 per annum. Subject to Members approval, the intention would be to submit an application to the INEOS Environment Fund for £87,500 for a period of seven years to cover the capital financing costs.
- 3.8 The intention would be to have the franchisee on a 'Full Repair and Insuring' (FRI) lease to avoid the Council having any ongoing revenue liabilities in respect of the building. Once completed and opened the café would generate income for the Council from the franchise rental, which could be used to offset the running costs of Pickerings Pasture.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no policy implications with regards to this proposal.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The proposal to create a café facility at Pickerings Pasture LNR would add £520,000 to the Councils Capital Programme. It is proposed that this would be funded over a seven year period at a capital financing cost of £87,500 per annum. A bid would be made to the Environment Fund in order to provide the necessary funding of £87,500 per annum for seven years.
- 5.2 The new café facility would be advertised as a franchise opportunity in common with the facilities that already operate in that way at

Phoenix Park, Runcorn Hill Park and at Victoria Park. All of these facilities generate income for the Council which is used to offset the running costs of its public parks.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

The creation of a café facility at Pickerings Pasture LNR will contribute to this priority as it will allow families to spend longer at the park in a clean and healthy environment. At present the lack of public toilets and refreshment facilities limit the time that visitors can spend at the location.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The operator of a café facility will need to employ new staff and train them accordingly. The facility will also need to procure supplies and services locally. The existing franchised facilities within the Council's public parks have created new jobs that are stable and secure.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The provision of café facilities within public parks, with their public toilets, has resulted in an increase in visitor numbers every time it has been implemented. More visits to parks means more people taking healthy exercise and gaining the benefits of being in a green environment which is proven to be beneficial for mental health.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

Busier public parks always lead to safer public parks. Positive use deters misuse. The presence of a staffed café within a park helps to create the feeling of a safer environment and it also brings a level of supervision that would otherwise not be possible.

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

Pickerings Pasture LNR was opened in the mid-1980s. It has proved to be a popular facility since then but the infrastructure, such as the present underused portacabin facility, is getting old and worn out. The provision of a new building at this park would significantly enhance this area of the Borough.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The key risk would be failure to secure money from the Environment Fund.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no equality or diversity issues.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The proposal would make a positive impact on Climate Change by creating a facility within a local park, Pickerings Pasture LNR, that would be attractive to local people and would thereby reduce the number of miles that people would have to travel.

Pickerings Pasture is accessible by bus.

The new building would be far more energy efficient than the existing facility and could be made more so if required.

**10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

There are none under the meaning of the Act.

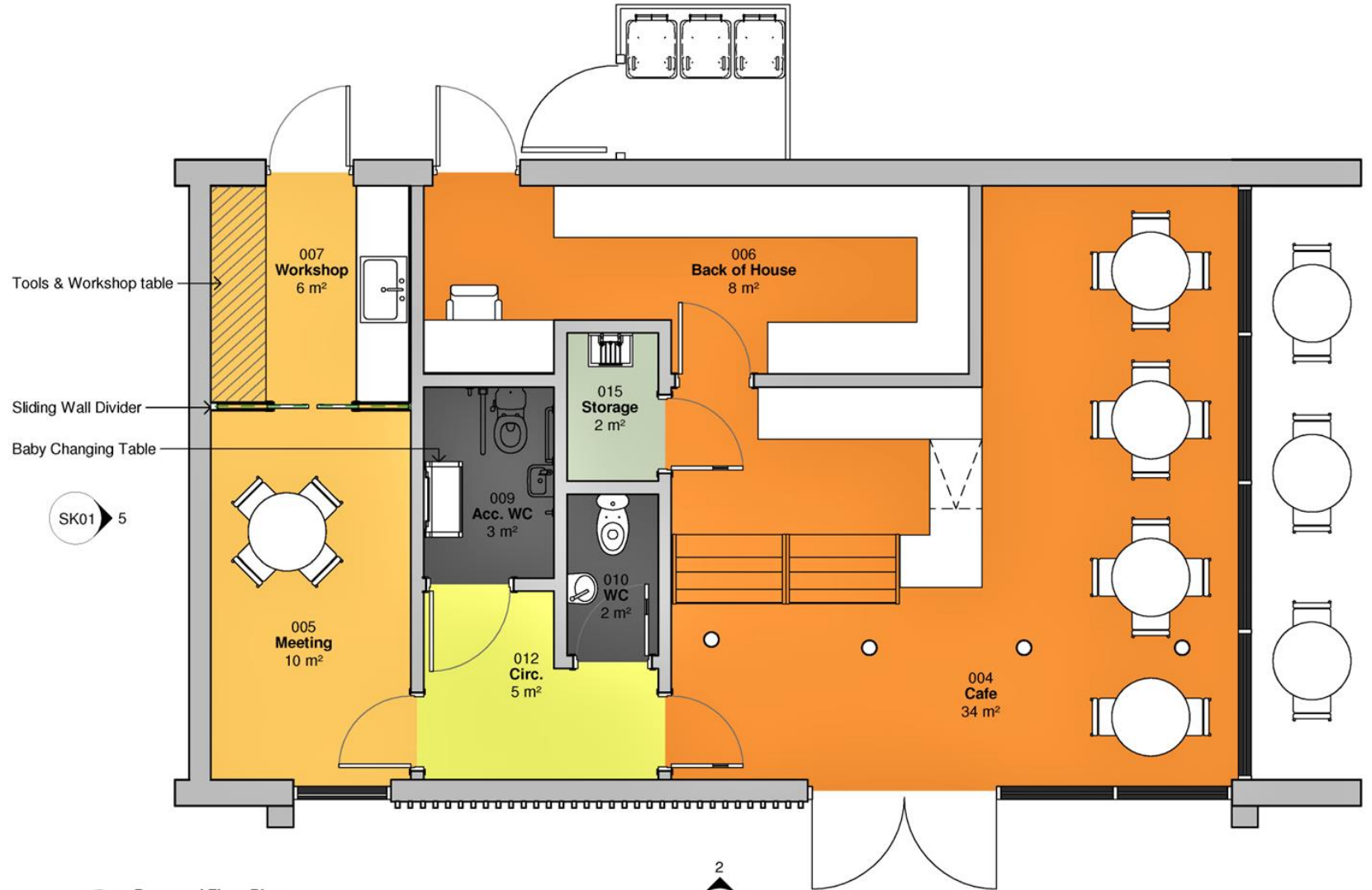


# Pickering's Pasture Proposed New Cafe





# Pickering's Pasture Proposed New Cafe



**1** Proposed Floor Plan  
1 : 50

