

Public Document Pack



Corporate Policy and Performance Board

Tuesday, 7 November 2023 6.30 p.m.
Civic Suite - Town Hall, Runcorn

S. Young

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Robert Gilligan (Chair)	Labour
Councillor Ged Philbin (Vice-Chair)	Labour
Councillor John Bradshaw	Conservative
Councillor Noel Hutchinson	Labour
Councillor Rosie Leck	Labour
Councillor Geoffrey Logan	Labour
Councillor Alan Lowe	Labour
Councillor Angela McInerney	Labour
Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh	Labour
Councillor Sharon Thornton	Labour
Councillor Kevan Wainwright	Labour

*Please contact Kim Butler on 0151 511 7496 or
kim.butler@halton.gov.uk for further information.*

The next meeting of the Board is on Tuesday, 23 January 2024

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

Part I

Item No.	Page No.
1. MINUTES	1 - 4
2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)	
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 and voting on the item.	
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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.

CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 5 September 2023 in the Civic Suite - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chair), Philbin (Vice-Chair), J. Bradshaw, Hutchinson, Leck, Logan, A. Lowe and Wainwright

Apologies for Absence: Councillors A. McInerney, N. Plumpton Walsh and Thornton

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Butler, E. Dawson, S. Davies and M. Reaney

Also in attendance: None

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

	<i>Action</i>
CS10 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes from the meeting held on 6 June 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
CS11 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
<p>The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.</p>	
CS12 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
<p>The Board was presented with the minutes relating to the Corporate Services Portfolio which had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of the Board.</p> <p>Members discussed the minutes and the following comments were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board expressed an interest on the developments of the Transformation Programme; • Observations were made about environmental issues in the Borough; • Onward Housing had confirmed that some of their contracted services were to be brought back in-house in January 2024 and would work more closely with the Council to address some issues. 	

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

Councillors Wainwright and Hutchinson declared an other registratable interest for the following item as they are both trustees of the Catalyst Museum.

CS13 PROGRAMMES OFFICE UPDATE

The Board received a report on the work of the Programmes Office in securing external funding resources into Halton. The report provided an update on the Programmes Office key activities and priorities as well as emerging issues in external funding and funding statistics for 2022-23.

The key priorities for 2022-23 had been:

- Embedding the new Programmes Office function, including recruitment to new posts;
- Supporting the delivery of the Government's levelling up agenda, including Towns Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF);
- Disseminating details of funding that will support the Cost of Living crisis;
- Disseminating details of funding that will help mitigate climate change and help deliver HBC's Climate Change Action Plan;
- Ensuring the remaining ESIF (European Strategic Investment Fund) is secured, spent and monitored; and
- Supporting the development of the HBC Cultural Strategy and Heritage Open Days programme.

The report also described some of the key schemes currently supported by the team which included:

- The £23.6 million Town Deal Programme for Runcorn;
- Halton's allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund;
- Halton's allocation of an LCR Destination Marketing programme;
- The Community and Voluntary Sector; and
- Liverpool City Region and Cultural/Visitor Economy work.

It was noted that the Programmes Office would work more with the new Environment and Regeneration Directorate on some smaller projects to try and develop them.

Members of the Board discussed the report and raised the issue regarding climate change and electric vehicles. They queried if the Council was involved in the Infrastructure Fund and Infrastructure Grant for the two periods 2023-24 and 2024-25. Officers agreed to provide a response for Members.

Monthly funding bulletins were produced and circulated and Members were invited to join the distribution list if they did not already receive it. It was suggested that the bulletins were also sent to local housing providers and Four Estates who did a lot of community work in Halton.

Corporate
Director, Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

It was confirmed that external funding training would be promoted in the Autumn and offered to the Member Development Group.

Executive
Director,
Environment &
Regeneration

RESOLVED: That the Board note the report.

CS14 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT GROUP NOTES

The Board considered the minutes of the Member Development Group meeting held on 14 March 2023.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

CS15 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR QUARTER 4 OF 2022/23

The Board received the Performance Management Report for Quarter 4 of 2022/23. The reports related to the following functional areas which reported to the Board and detailed progress against service objectives and milestones and performance targets, and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period:

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

It was noted that Members had previously received a copy of this report via email in July 2023, when the report had been finalised.

Members of the Board discussed the report and referenced Local Indicator 12 - average time to recruit and subsequently requested a further update on the Council's recruitment processes following the report they had received last year.

RESOLVED: That the Quarter 4 Performance Management report be noted.

Corporate
Director, Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

CS16 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR QUARTER 1 OF 2023/24

The Board received the Performance Management Report for Quarter 1 of 2023/24. The reports related to the following functional areas which reported to the Board and detailed progress against service objectives and milestones and performance targets, and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period:

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

Members of the Board discussed the report and asked if there was a reason for the reduction of take up of free school meals – performance indicator CE LI 01. Officers agreed to confirm this query in due course.

The Chair suggested that for future performance monitoring reports, Board Members should submit any questions in advance of the meeting to ensure that answers can be provided at the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Quarter 1 Performance Management report be noted.

Operational
Director,
Community &
Green Space

Meeting ended at 7.40 p.m.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 7 November 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Public Question Time

WARD(s): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 34(9).
- 1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That any questions received be dealt with.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Standing Order 34(9) states that Public Questions shall be dealt with as follows:-

- (i) A total of 30 minutes will be allocated for dealing with questions from members of the public who are residents of the Borough, to ask questions at meetings of the Policy and Performance Boards.
- (ii) Members of the public can ask questions on any matter relating to the agenda.
- (iii) Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be given by 4.00 pm on the working day prior to the date of the meeting to the Committee Services Manager. At any one meeting no person/organisation may submit more than one question.
- (iv) One supplementary question (relating to the original question) may be asked by the questioner, which may or may not be answered at the meeting.
- (v) The Chair or proper officer may reject a question if it:-
 - Is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
 - Is defamatory, frivolous, offensive, abusive or racist;
 - Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
 - Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

- (vi) In the interests of natural justice, public questions cannot relate to a planning or licensing application or to any matter which is not dealt with in the public part of a meeting.
- (vii) The Chair will ask for people to indicate that they wish to ask a question.
- (viii) **PLEASE NOTE** that the maximum amount of time each questioner will be allowed is 3 minutes.
- (ix) If you do not receive a response at the meeting, a Council Officer will ask for your name and address and make sure that you receive a written response.

Please bear in mind that public question time lasts for a maximum of 30 minutes. To help in making the most of this opportunity to speak:-

- Please keep your questions as concise as possible.
- Please do not repeat or make statements on earlier questions as this reduces the time available for other issues to be raised.
- Please note public question time is not intended for debate – issues raised will be responded to either at the meeting or in writing at a later date.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** - none.

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 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

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

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 7 November 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Executive Board Minutes

WARD(s): Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Minutes relating to the Corporate Services Portfolio which have been considered by the Executive Board are attached at Appendix 1 for information.
- 1.2 The Minutes are submitted to inform the Policy and Performance Board of decisions taken in their area.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Minutes be noted.

3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None.

4.0 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

None

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 None.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

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

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

Extract of Executive Board Minutes relevant to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2023**

EXB26	2023/24 SPENDING AS AT 30 JUNE 2023
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The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which reported the Council’s overall revenue net spending position as of 30 June 2023, together with an initial forecast outturn position.

A summary of spending against the operational revenue and capital net spending position as at 30 June 2023 together with a 2023/24 forecast outturn position was presented in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 and these provided detailed figures for each individual Department. In overall terms net spending as at 30 June 2023 was £2.023m over budget. The outturn forecast for the year estimated that net spend would be over the approved budget by £8.415m.

The report detailed a review of the Council General Reserve as at 31 March 2023. The current balance of reserves held was not sufficient to meet the current forecast outturn overspend position for the year and it was clear that there needed to be a significant reduction in spending by all Departments over the coming months to reduce the forecast outturn overspend.

Council had previously approved the capital programme for 2023/24 at its meeting on 8 March 2023. Subsequently, new capital grant allocations had been received and slippage to capital projects for 2022/23 had been rolled forward to the current year. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 30 June 2023 and reported on the Council’s total planned Capital Programme expenditure over the next three years. Appendix 4 outlined the saving measures against the budget for the three year period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026 together with information on action to date to achieve the target saving.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continues to be limited to only absolutely essential items;
- 2) Strategic Directors take urgent action to identify areas where spending could be reduced or suspended for the remainder of the current financial year, or additional funding secured; and
- 3) Council be requested to approve the 2023/24 to 2025/26 Capital Programme as set out in paragraph 3.18 and Appendix 3.

EXB27	TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE
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The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director: Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, which provided an update on the progress made within the Council's Transformation Programme. Work had continued to define the scope of additional projects within the Programme and the schedule of projects set out in Appendix A of the report had been updated to reflect this.

The Board noted that:

- early benefits had been realised within the 'A clear, affordable and appropriate SEND offer' project with cost avoidance of in excess of £300,000 identified;
- the realignment of Administrative Support services, which formed part of the 'Simplifying the Customer Journey' project was expected to realise savings in Quarter 3;
- there had been a refocusing of programme support provided to Children's Social Care, which was coinciding with the appointment of the Director of Children's Services; and
- the estimated savings for the programme which were set out in Appendix B of the report.

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

REPORT TO:	Corporate Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	7 November 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Corporate Director, Chief Executive's Delivery Unit
PORTFOLIO:	Resources
SUBJECT:	Corporate Accident / Incident Report 1.4.23 to 31.8.23
WARD(S)	All

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To report on the performance of health safety management within the Authority for 1st April 2023 to 31st August 2023.

2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That the Board notes the contents of the report including the recommendations and actions for 2023/24.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The health and safety report on the performance of health and safety management in relation to Key Performance Indicators for the current financial year is appended.

3.2 It highlights health and safety information.

3.3 The report includes information around the number of actual near misses, over 7 day and significant accidents.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The report assists in the delivery of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial implications.

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

6.1 The provision of a safe working environment and reduction in accidents is important in order to provide:

- A healthy Halton;
- A safer Halton; and
- Efficient and Effective Delivery of Service.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Accidents which lead to lost time have financial implications for the authority (although these are always secondary to our concern for the well-being of staff and customers).

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues arising from this report.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None identified.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.



**CORPORATE ACCIDENT / INCIDENT REPORT
MANAGEMENT TEAM
1st April 2023 to 31st August 2023**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 clearly places responsibility on those who create the risk to manage it. The new HSE Strategy ‘Protecting People and Places 2022 to 2032’ allows for the HSE to adapt and respond to a changing landscape. It also allows it to continue to support the delivery of wider government priorities including the move towards net zero and improving the health of the nation.

The HSE now also has added responsibilities, such as becoming the appointed ‘Building Safety Regulator’ and also has an extended role in chemical regulation following Brexit.

It remains the same that the fundamental principle of health and safety law is that those who create risks are best placed to manage them. The expectations and evidence suggest that most workplaces have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to manage safety for themselves.

1.2 Health and Safety Management System

In order to demonstrate how Halton Borough Council as an employer is delivering the HSE Strategy, this report is to provide Management Team with details of health and safety performance in relation to Key Performance Indicators (KPI). Details of KPI’s are as follows:

LEAD INDICATORS

Proactive action taken and any outcomes

KPI

1. **Number of risk assessments completed on corporate systems**
Rationale – creating a safe working environment
2. **Number of Near Misses**
Rationale – action taken to prevent further similar incidents and before injuries
3. **Percentage of registered staff on the Lone Working Monitoring System who are utilising the system**
Rationale – demonstrating effective management of lone working risks

REACTIVE [Lagging] INDICATORS

Reactive action taken in response to accidents/incidents

4. **Number of Significant¹ and RIDDOR Reportable Accidents²**
Rationale – identify accident/incident trends and actions required to prevent similar occurrences
5. **Number of Violent Incidents**

Rationale – identify incident trends and actions required to prevent similar

¹ Accidents that either require more than basic first aid, incur time lost or arise from a failure in health and safety management

² Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, (RIDDOR) 2013, including Fatalities, Specified Injuries, Over 7-day Injuries, Reportable Occupational Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences

occurrences. Encourage all staff to report incidents to give a true picture and enable appropriate mitigations to be put in place.

National and Local Information together with performance gaps and incident trends form the basis for the Recommended Actions for 2023/2024.

By responding positively to identified trends, the Authority can demonstrate compliance with the recommendations of the Health and Safety Executive's guidance HS (G)65 "Management for Health and Safety".

2. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Summary

Reportable and significant accidents for Halton Employees are currently at a total of 5 across all five directorates plus 2 near misses.

Violent Incidents corporately are showing currently as 20 verbal and 14 physical incidents. Within schools for this period there were 7 physical incidents and 4 verbal.

Lone Working Contact Centre Monitoring update – Due to Transformation and the changes in the Admin Services Team, there has been no provision of any Lone Working Data for this period.

Risk Assessments completed on the corporate risk assessment system are 1767 for all five directorates compared to 1936 last year. This is a decrease in figures.

The HSE recently released their annual statistics which includes 135 workplace fatalities (Construction, Agriculture and Manufacturing are the top 3 workplace categories, the same as the previous year).

There are forthcoming changes to the fire regulations on 1st October following the Grenfell fire in 2017 and the Protect Duty, Martyn's Law is with Parliament for consultation.

2.2 Recommendations 2023/24

The following recommendations are as a result of the accident analysis data for the first half of 2023 from 1st April and will be actioned during the period 2023/24.

No.	KPI No.	ACTION	RATIONALE	RESPONSIBLE
1.	1	All managers and assessors to ensure risk assessments on the corporate risk assessment system across all areas are reviewed and up to date as per safety bulletin 2021 8.	Position statements, section 7 below.	All managers and assessors
3.	3	Ensure staff follow Safe Systems of Work (SSOW) to reduce likelihood of involvement in an accident.	Reduction of accidents, suffering and associated financial implications.	All managers - ongoing

GENERAL ACTIONS

Action a series of Lockdown/Bomb Threat Exercises across main Council buildings, some tabletop exercises, some full exercise	2023/24	Health and Safety Team
Review and update Health and Safety policies (Corporate & Schools) requiring timescale or legislation reviews	Ongoing	Health and Safety Team
School Audit and Health check visit programme	Ongoing	Health and Safety Team
Programme of departmental audits actioned and ongoing for all corporate areas	2023/24	Health and Safety Team and Team Managers.

3. INFORMATION

3.1 Local/National Information

National:

The HSE recently released their annual report which gives current statistics in relation to workplace incidents April 2022 to March 2023.

The industries with the highest deaths were construction (45), agriculture, forestry, and fishing (21), manufacturing (15), and transportation and storage (15). Agriculture, forestry, and fishing has the highest rate of fatal injury per 100,000 workers of all the main industrial sectors followed by waste and recycling.

The three most common causes of fatal injuries are falls from height (40), being struck by a moving object (29), and being struck by a moving vehicle (20).

The total of **135 worker deaths in 2022/23** is higher than the previous year (123) but is in line with pre-pandemic levels. The figure for 2020/21 was 145.

A further 68 members of the public were killed following a work-related incident in 2022/23. This is a decrease of 20 from last year.

HSE has also published the annual figures for Mesothelioma, a cancer caused by past exposure to asbestos. The figures show 2,268 people died from the disease in 2021. This is a fall of 302 compared with the 2,570 deaths in 2020 and substantially lower than the average of 2,520 deaths per year over the period 2012-2019.

Local:

On 1st October this year fire regulations are changing in respect of the Grenfell incident in 2017 and as an employer HBC has to register a responsible person in each building with the enforcing body (of which up to now has not been named, but will more than likely be the HSE).

Equally, The Protect Duty, (Martyn's Law) is still with Parliament for consultation and again this will force legal duties on employers to have responsible persons in place in buildings with robust procedures for emergencies in the event of an incident.

It is already written in law under the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 under section 2 which places a duty on employers to protect employees whilst at work including in emergency situations.

The Management of H & S at Work Regulations 1999 also states under regulation 8 that employers have a duty to have in place procedures for serious and imminent danger.

Halton Borough Council, as an employer, works with managers and staff to work towards legal compliance in the above areas.

4. LEAD INDICATORS

4.1 . Number of risk assessments completed on corporate systems

4.1.1 An electronic risk assessment system, based on the Intranet, has been 'live' since September 2011.

- Actual number of assessments completed up to 01/09/23 are:

Adult Services Directorate – 130
Chief Executives Directorate – 328
Childrens Services Directorate - 140
Environment & Regeneration Directorate - 192
Public Health Directorate - 47

See section 7 for position statements and comparisons.

4.2 Number of Near Misses

4.2.1 The number reported in the last 3 years are:

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
2	10	2

From the 1st April 2023 to 31st August 2023 there have been 2 near misses reported on the corporate accident/incident system.

4.3 Percentage of registered staff on the Lone Working Monitoring System who are utilising the system.

4.3.1 Lone Working – No available data for this period.

5 REACTIVE ['Lagging'] INDICATORS

5.1 Number of Significant and RIDDOR Reportable Accidents

5.1.1 The number of significant accidents and RIDDOR reportable to the HSE for each Directorate excluding schools that took place from 1st April 2023 to 31st August 2023 is 6

Directorate	Specified Injury	> 7-Day	Significant
Adult Services Directorate	0	0	1
Chief Executive Directorate	0	0	0
Childrens Services Directorate	0	0	0
Environment & Regeneration Directorate	1	0	3
Public Health Directorate	0	0	0
TOTAL 2023 /2024	1	0	4
TOTAL 2022/2023	0	0	6
TOTAL 2021/2022	0	2	6

5.2 Number of Violent Incidents

5.2.1 From 1st April 2023 to 31st August 2023

Directorate	Verbal	Physical
Adult Services Directorate	4	1
Chief Executives Directorate	6	0
Childrens Services Directorate	1	7
Environment & Regeneration Directorate	10	5
Public Health Directorate	0	1

Directorate	Verbal	Physical
TOTAL 2023/24	21	14
TOTAL 2022/23	10	7
TOTAL 2021/22	12	0
TOTAL 2020/21	8	1

Areas of highest recorded incidents: Leisure (12), Care Homes (5), Markets (2), Children in need (2). Leisure services have seen a jump in the school holiday period, where a common theme appears to be groups of young users showing off to each other. Personal Safety training has been facilitated for staff. Care homes have seen an increase from family members who have raised questions with regard to how their relative is being care for. Advice has been issued.

5.2.2 Schools

From 1st April 2023 to 31st August 2023 there have been 11 total incidents in schools. This is a slight overall reduction.

Schools	Verbal	Physical
TOTAL 2023/24	4	7
TOTAL 2022/23	3	14
TOTAL 2021/22	2	16
TOTAL 2020/21	4	11

6. Risk Assessment Position Statements

September 2020 Enterprise, Community & Resources 1255 People 650
 September 2021 Enterprise, Community & Resources 1052 People 507
 September 2022 Enterprise, Community & Resources 1226 People 710

September 2023: New Directorates:

Adult Services Directorate: Expected-178, Completed -130
Chief Executives Directorate: Expected -401, Completed -328
Childrens Services Directorate: Expected-214, Completed -140

Environment & Regeneration Directorate: Expected – 218, Completed -192
Public Health Directorate: Expected – 53, Completed -47

Full Position shown on next page.

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Risk Assessment ent Type	Adult Services Directorate			Chief Executive Directorate			Children's Services Directorate			Environment and Regeneration Directorate			Public Health Directorate		
	Expected No. RAs (up-to date)	Actual No. RAs	%	Expected No. RAs (up-to date)	Actual No. RAs	%	Expected No. RAs (up-to date)	Actual No. RAs	%	Expected No. RAs (up-to date)	Actual No. RAs	%	Expected No. RAs (up-to date)	Actual No. RAs	%
Home Working Risk Assessment ent	346	208	59.94	239	77	33.05	2	0	0	5	3	60	1	1	100
Enform ential Assessment ent	58	28	44.83	72	36	50	1	0	0	1	1	100	1	1	100
Fire Risk Assessment ent															
Low Working Risk Assessment ent	30	12	40	23	6	26.09	1	1	100	1	1	100			
Manual Handling Risk Assessment ent	7	5	71.43	3	3	100									
Occupational Risk Assessment ent	224	188	83.04	50	23	46	1	0	0	2	1	50	7	5	71.43
Leader Checklist	10	6	60												
General Risk Assessment ent	107	66	61.68	107	44	41.12	14	9	64.29				3	2	66.67
COSHH Risk Assessment ent	59	42	76.36	63	52	82.54							22	18	81.82
COSHH (Advance) Risk Assessment ent	11	9	81.82	7	1	14.29							1	1	100
Transport in Depots Risk Assessment ent	1	1	100										1	1	100
Workstation Risk Assessment ent	180	91	50.56	220	47	21.36	156	118	75.64	391	321	82.1	211	137	64.93
Total	1029	650	63.17	778	289	37.15	175	128	73.14	400	327	81.75	244	139	64.95

Lynn Pennington-Ramsden
 Principal Health and Safety Advisor,
 Risk and Emergency Planning
 1st September 2023

REPORT TO:	Corporate Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	7 November 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Corporate Director, Chief Executive's Delivery Unit
PORTFOLIO:	Leader
SUBJECT:	The Corporate Plan - The Big Conversation Update
WARD(S)	Borough Wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To share with Corporate PPB an update on 'The Big Conversation', which is integral to formulating a new Council Corporate Plan, to take effect from April 2024.

2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That**

- 1) the report be noted; and**
- 2) that Corporate PPB continues to endorse the approach to facilitate 'The Big Conversation'.**

3.0 **Supporting Information**

3.1 Background

The Big Conversation is about engaging with the public so that they understand the challenges that the Council is facing.

It is an approach between the Council and those who live or work in Halton to work together in order to create an improved borough in all aspects of everyday life.

A Stakeholder Analysis together with a Communications Plan was developed in order to generate and establish as many opportunities as possible to involve all our stakeholders in many different and varied ways.

The Big Conversation consultation is open until November 30th 2023.

3.2 Breakdown of responses by source, as of October 4th 2023:

Total Number of responses: 777

No reply	41
Inside Halton	37
HBC Staff	220
Councillors	-
Comms Flyer	9
Comms Poster	-
Comms Desktop	-
Comms Outdoor	-
Comms Partner	-
Comms Short URL	5
Comms Media	43
Comms Banner	-
Comms School	-
Comms Staff Poster	-
Comms Bin Wagon	-
Comms Meta Advert	197
Comms Organic Facebook	94
Comms Organic X	9
Comms Organic Threads	1
Comms Organic LinkedIn	4
Comms Chamber Newsletter	-
Comms Business Improvement Growth	-
Comms Carers Centre	116
Comms Adult Social Care	-
Comms TUC	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES	777

3.3 Promotion, Consultation & Engagement:

3.3.1 Consultation opportunity has been targeted to the following places / groups as detailed below. The number indicates the potential responses available;

- Social Media Impressions: 234,487 (times the survey was delivered to feeds on Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, Threads, LinkedIn and X)
- 1st Tuesday Business Event: 60
- Active Ageing Get Together Forum: 115
- Grangeway Community Centre: 30
- Dementia Group: 15

- Halton Patient Participation Group: 24
- Heads of Primary Schools: 60
- Runcorn Shopping city (specific) Adults: 44, Under 16`s: 6
- Widnes Market (specific) Adults: 30, Under 16`s: 10
- School Circular: 100 staff (serving 18,388 pupils)
- HBC Employees: 3000

Note that it's difficult to put an exact figure on the actual footfall for Runcorn Shopping Centre and Widnes Market, but based on estimated weekly footfall a conservative best guess would be:
Runcorn Shopping Centre: 500 – 1,000
Widnes Market: 500 – 1,000

3.3.2 Specific Forums and Venues attended / Scheduled to attend:

- **HBC Workforce**
Email to HBC Workforce: July 28th

Stephen Young Video message: September 5th
- **General Public**
Inside Halton Magazine: Summer edition
- **Businesses**
Halton Chamber of Commerce Network Meeting: September 5th

Halton & Warrington Business Fair: November 9th

Sci-Tech Daresbury Business Breakfast: November 10th

Newsletters - Halton Chamber of Commerce
Business Improvement Growth
- **Partners**
Halton Patient Participation Group: September 28th

Halton TUC

Newsletters - Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS
Halton Patient Participation Group
- **Adult Services**
Healthy & Active Ageing Event (Runcorn Shopping Centre):
September 18th

Dementia Group: Widnes (September 29th) and Runcorn
(October 11th)

Partners in Prevention Event (Widnes Market): September

21st

Healthy and Active Ageing Event Get Together: Runcorn (October 9th) / Widnes (October 17th)

Newsletters – Young Carers and Adult Carers

- **Children Services**

Primary Schools Heads Meeting: September 21st
(with an email follow up: September 21st)

Children`s Provider Network Meeting: October 4th

Halton Youth Cabinet: October 12th

Family Hub Centres – Kingsway (October 12th) and Windmill Hill (October 24th)

Riverside College: October 17th

Newsletters – Schools e-circular: September 4th

3.4 **Emerging Themes:**

3.4.1 A reminder that the 5 suggested themes identified were:

- Tackling inequality, helping those who are most in need
- Building a strong, sustainable local economy
- Supporting children, young people and families
- Improving health, promoting wellbeing and supporting greater independence
- Working towards a greener future

3.4.2 Level of agreement to all of the 5 suggested themes is very high, with the highest level of agreement being: 'Improving health, promoting wellbeing and supporting greater independence', and the lowest being 'Working towards a greener future'.

3.4.3 In terms of how can the Council can support these themes, the top 3 identified so far are:

- 'Provide opportunities for young people to engage with their local community and do things that interest them, keep them safe and make them happy'.
- 'Create vibrant town centres for everyone to enjoy across the Borough'
- 'Continue to ensure local people are able to enjoy the Borough`s parks and green spaces'

3.4.4 In terms of the ways our stakeholders can support the identified themes, these were as follows:

- 'Spending money with local shops and businesses'
- 'Doing their best to stay healthy and active'
- 'Look out for children and the vulnerable'

3.4.5 Identifying other potential corporate themes, the top 3 were:

- Business / Regeneration / Employment
- Environment: litter / pavements / greenery overgrowth
- Crime / Police / Antisocial behaviour

3.4.6 Given only 1% of respondents were aged between 16-24 years to-date, the current desires and commitments could change significantly when we have engaged with a greater number of young people. Nationally, younger people appear to be more concerned about the climate change agenda, and therefore the lack of support for green spaces and recycling efforts may change in December once the final sum of raw data is available.

Nevertheless, there is evident support for the provision of learning and skills services that nurture young adults and provide sustainable career opportunities for the whole borough; which is subsequently supported by the desire of a strong local economy – which residents are willing to invest in.

3.5 **Gaps and actions required:**

3.5.1 Demographic – there is a clear gap in the 16 - 24 year olds age bracket.

Actions:

- Target young adults at Riverside college/post 16 education settings
- Planned visits to Family Hubs (Kingsway and Windmill Hill)
- Sharing the Big Conversation on forms of social media which would target specifically this age group, eg Instagram and Messenger.

3.5.2 Geographical areas – analysis has shown that response has been low in 4 wards, 2 in Widnes, (Ditton, Hale Village and Halebank and Bankfield) and 2 in Runcorn, (Halton Lea and Norton South and Preston Brook)

Action:

These areas will targeted by iWalkers on Saturday, November 4th. Ward members will be advised that this will be taking place.

3.5.3 Work on-going in terms of indenting specific stakeholder groups that we haven't actively engaged with as yet, such as Faith groups and the visually impaired.

3.5.4 The introduction of iWalkers, who wear screens that can feature multiple images and videos, as well as pass out flyers and collect information. On the day they will also add someone to a Whatsapp

group and send images for social media and updates about the days progress.

3.6 Timeline:

- Mid-October onwards – gaps identified and addressed
- November 30th 2023: Consultation ends.
- December 2023: Analysis undertaken – key priorities identified.
- January – February 2024: Summary developed / shared with stakeholders via drop-in sessions within council buildings and open engagement at community spaces.
- March 2024: Corporate Plan finalised and approved at key forums.
- April 2024: the New Corporate Plan is launched.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no specific policy implications at this stage; however ultimately there will be a new contemporary and relevant Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There will be a potential financial implication around the engagement of 2 iWalkers, at a cost of £1,200 per day for 8 hours.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 The Corporate Plan is Halton Borough Council's key strategic document. This plan sets out the main vision, themes and values of the Council.

'The Big Conversation' will help to determine the Council's new set of priorities, which will be translated into the plan.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The major risk is that we do nothing and roll out the same priorities as we have done in previous years. To this end the current Corporate Plan is a losing relevance and doesn't fully engage with either the workforce or the people of Halton in the contemporary environment.

7.2 The Council is serious about ‘Reimaging Halton’, aligned with that commitment, this is a perfect opportunity to undertake a meaningful piece of work which will engage the people of Halton and together with our workforce determine a set of new priorities, which will make a difference and take Halton forward over the next 3 – 5 years.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Equality and Diversity may well be a specific Corporate Plan priority, but if not then it will certainly underpin the Plan. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the policy development process.

The consultation process has been designed to be inclusive.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 At this stage there is nothing specific to highlight within the context of this report; however there is a distinct possibility that as a result of ‘The Big Conversation’ climate implications will form one, or a key part of on, of the Council’s key priorities.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO:	Corporate Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	7th November 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Head of HR Operations
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Services
SUBJECT	Resourcing the Council – challenges.
WARD(S):	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide the Board with an overall view of the resourcing challenges currently faced by the Council, their impact, implications, and options.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

The Board note the report and the actions being taken to mitigate the challenges.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Due to the scale and diverse nature of roles within the Council to deliver a complex array of services, there has been and will always be a need to fill vacant roles, review current roles, and create new posts to meet the demands of service delivery. This requires the need to attract and recruit talent, either externally in the local labour market, or internally. Internal recruitment normally results in a further vacancy to backfill.
- 3.2 The number of Council service vacancies requested for advertisement has increased significantly and consistently since 2021/2022. For comparative context, in 2016/17 the number of vacancies advertised was 343, in 2021/2022 was 610 and in 2022/2023 that had risen to 678. A summary of the 678 vacancies is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.3 The continued rise in vacancy numbers has created a substantial challenge as the Council's recruitment service is not substantively resourced at a level sufficient to manage workflow of such volumes. Temporary resource has been added to mitigate against any delays in service provision, which remain prevalent.
- 3.4 A number of key reasons can be cited for the continued increase in volume:

- A sustained drift away from Local Government as an employer of choice remains problematic in attracting and retaining talent in the organisation, anecdotally attributed to the poor perception of roles and static pay levels resulting from government austerity measures. This has created a more competitive labour market between Councils and widens the gap with other sectors.
- Some roles becoming increasingly demanding and challenging due to increased regulation and demand, e.g. Children's Social Care work, resulting in higher than average turnover levels and increased vacancy numbers, increasing agency usage and destabilising the substantive workforce.
- The Council responding to changing services and recruiting to roles to undertake health related work, such as those nursing roles in Care Homes.
- The Council being required to recruit additional roles to facilitate the delivery of continued contracts that the Council has entered into, such as delivery of the Work Programme and similar, in the Employment, Learning & Skills Service, as well as key corporate projects such as the Transformation Programme.

3.5 The failure to attract candidates to some roles results in re-advertising and repeat recruitment activity. This is similar for backfilling vacancies where internal recruitment has taken place contributes to the increased recruitment activity.

3.6 In addition, there is still a continued trend towards lower numbers of applicants for posts, lower quality applications, and successful candidates rescinding the offer of a post prior to taking up a role – usually because an alternative employment offer has been received from a different employer.

3.7 Additionally there remain situations where the Council finds itself having to withdraw offers of employment to successful candidates due to the failure of pre-employment checks. This was once a rare occurrence, but is now becoming more common.

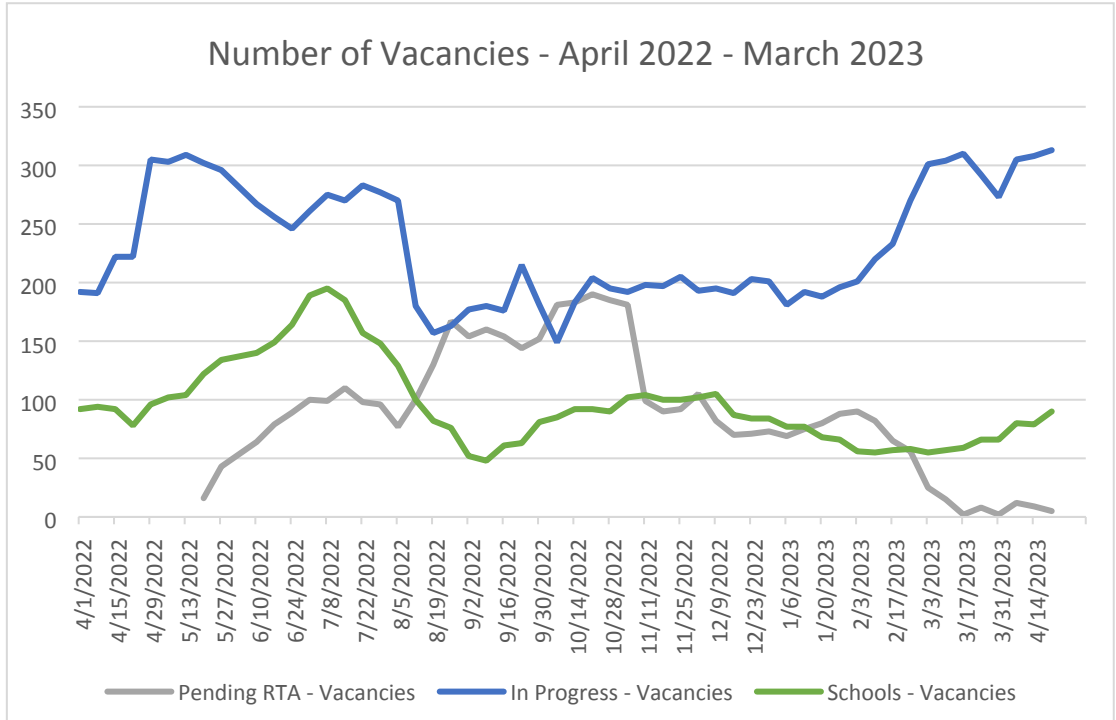
3.8 The recruitment service also processes recruitment for schools on a chargeable SLA basis. 44 schools have bought the recruitment service for the 2023/24 SLA year. In 2022/23 the service processed 362 school recruitments, and whilst the costs of this are covered by schools, it creates issues in workflow as many school recruitments need to be

completed between May and September in time for the start of the new school year.

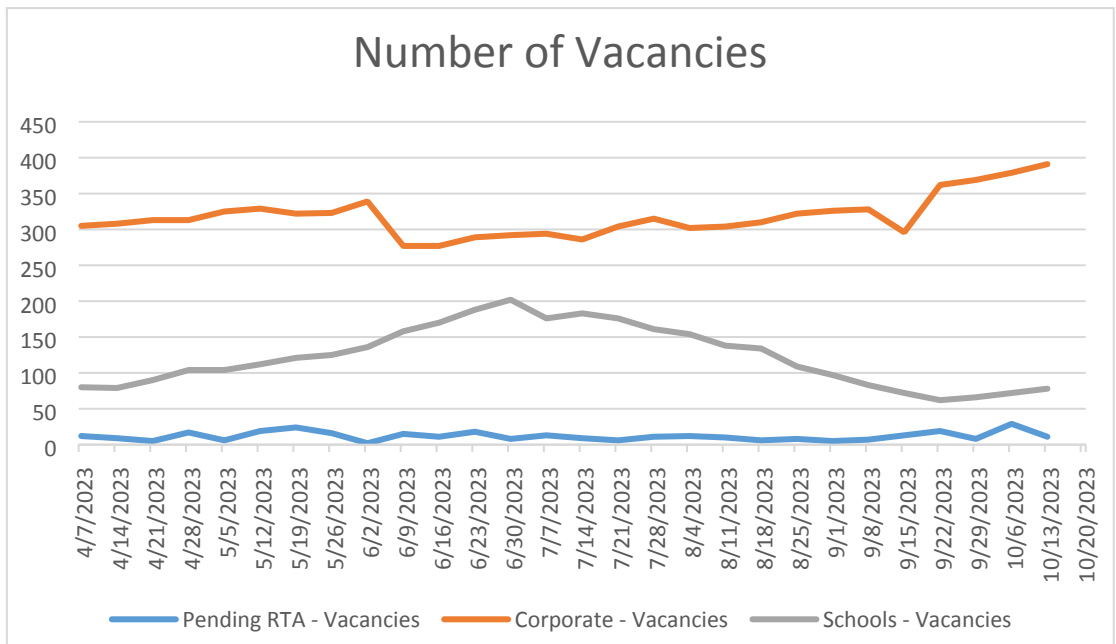
- 3.9 The Board has previously been advised that revised legislation was enacted in April 2020, under the auspices of the Government’s ‘Good Work Plan’, which emerged from the 2018 Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices. One key element of this was the introduction of the requirement to issue a contract of employment on or before the first day of employment. Hitherto, this requirement was to be met within six weeks of the employment start date adding to the workflow in pre-employment.
- 3.10 In operational terms, this provides the Council with a shortened window within which to complete a recruitment exercise. This can be largely managed in corporate recruitment, but in the case of school recruitment it means that all contracts must be issued before the first day of the new school year in September and this continues to create a bottleneck of work in the recruitment service and Pay and Pensions in the June to August period. This affects recruitment to posts in Council services and places pressure on the recruitment team.
- 3.11 At the time of writing (16th October 2023), the measure of workflow in the recruitment service is as follows:

Council Service Recruitment IN PROGRESS	Vacancies – 391 (135 in pre-employment check stage)
Council Service Recruitment WAITING	Vacancies – 2
School Recruitment IN PROGRESS	Vacancies – 78 (22 in pre-employment check stage)

- 3.12 The trend of vacancies for the 2022/23 Financial Year is represented in the graph below:



3.13 The trend of vacancies for the 2023/24 Financial Year to-date is represented in the graph below:

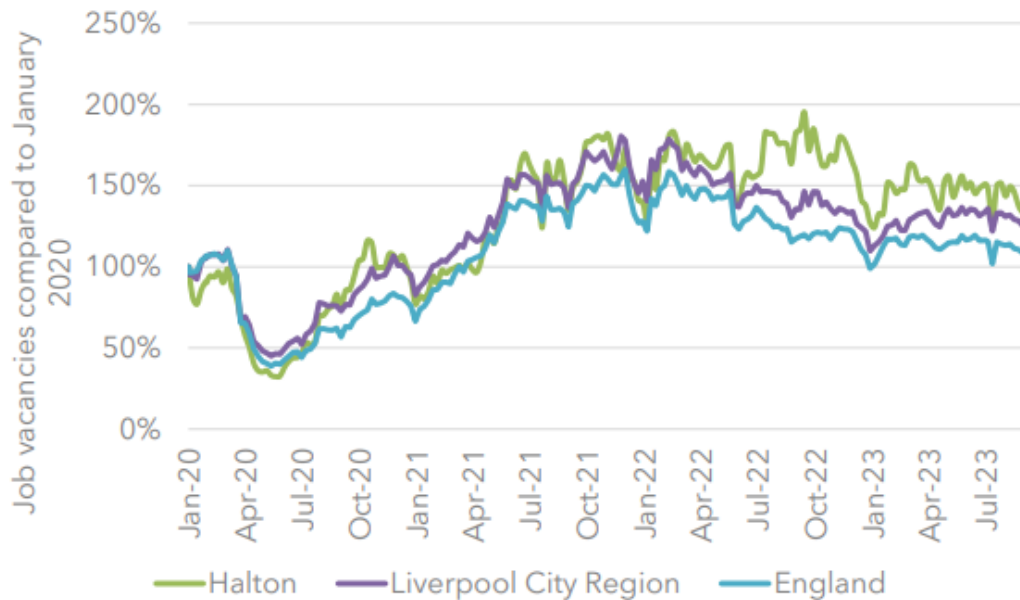


3.14 It should be noted that the upswing in vacancies is not unique to Halton Council. At the current time, both public and private sector employers continue to see a similar impact across their organisations throughout all services.

- 3.15 All Local Authorities in the Liverpool City Region are continuing to report recruitment issues and certain post types continue to provide the highest level of challenge across the city region, namely social worker roles, caring posts in the adult care sector, nursing posts in the adult care sector, technical and professional roles across a broad range of service areas, and more recently administrative and service industry type posts.
- 3.16 The general vacancy situation within the UK economy has shifted and remained since COVID restrictions began to be relaxed in late 2021. The Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development Labour Market Outlook: Summer 2023 was published on 14th August 2023. Key messages within it are:
- 50% of employers have hard-to-fill vacancies. A similar level expects significant problems in filling these roles over the next six months. These are most common in education (56%), transport and storage (54%), manufacturing (54%) and utilities (51%).
 - Almost three-quarters (73%) of employers plan to recruit in the next three months. Recruitment intentions remain highest in the public sector (83%). It's noteworthy that public sector employers (43%) anticipate significant problems in filling roles which is higher than private sector (24%) and voluntary sector (21%) employers.
 - The proportion of employers planning on making redundancies has risen from last year to 19% from 13%. This has risen from 12% last quarter to 20% this quarter for public sector.
 - Employers' focus on retention and training demonstrates their desire to get more from their existing employees in the face of recruitment challenges with 64% of employers making counter offers. This is more prevalent in private sector as it is evident the public sector is less able to make counteroffers to retain staff.
 - The top response planned by employers to recruitment and retention difficulties is to upskill existing staff (49%), followed by increasing salaries (44%) and to increase duties of existing staff (29%).
- 3.17 When considering sub-regional economic data for the Liverpool City Region, the number of job vacancies advertised on line continues to remain at historically high levels. In mid-September, there were around 15,700 vacancies in the Liverpool City Region, which remain 33% higher than pre-pandemic levels. At the same time there were around 1,000 vacancies in Halton, which is +46% higher than pre-pandemic levels.

3.18 The number of vacancies in the Liverpool City Region continues to remain at historically high levels and has grown faster than the national average (+12% pre-pandemic levels) as shown below:

Change in online job vacancies since January 2020



Source: ONS Online Job Advert Estimates, 2023; LCR Insights, 2023

3.19 In a local context, the latest available ONS statistics show that the Halton has seen progress over recent years, closing gaps with national average. Employment rate in Halton stands at 75% a slight increase from last year (74.8%), and compared to 74% in Liverpool, however below national levels of 76%. Whilst this is very positive in socio-economic terms, it points to additional restrictions on the available pool of labour.

3.20 The above data demonstrates one of the reasons why the number of available candidates in the market place appears to have reduced, but other factors are also prevalent;

- ONS data shows an estimated 2m people in the UK suffering from self-reported long COVID as at March 2023.
- Employee jobs recovery following COVID-19 has varied with the main gains being in health and social work, professional, and scientific and technical activities.
- The effect of the pandemic, and of Brexit, on people coming to work in the UK and on foreign workers who were already here.

- The Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development Migrant Workers and Skills Shortages in the UK report 2023 evidences a reduction of EU Nationals working in the UK from 2.6 million (early 2020) to 2.4 million (late 2022). Albeit it is reported the number of non-EU workers rising from 1.5 million to 1.9 million over the same period.
- The data shows a consequence of Brexit is the migrants arriving to work in the UK are typically qualified to degree level or above. This however perpetuates the challenges in filling unskilled roles.
- The outlook remains unclear with rising inflation, economic uncertainty, and a cost of living crisis possibly bringing about further dynamic change in the labour market in the coming months and possible years.

3.21 A revised approach to attracting candidates to Council roles is taking place and continues to be explored. At this point in time the HR Operations Division has recently implemented;

- Re-designing the recruitment process (application stages particularly) to streamlined applications to CV's to make it easier for candidates to apply.
- Engaging candidates earlier in a recruitment process – this may be through new routes such as social media platforms, or in-person events to speculatively secure potential new recruits. Increased visibility at graduate events and job fairs promoting opportunities within Halton.
- Establishing multi-grade (career grade posts) to make posts more attractive to potential applicants and promote retention through development over the long-term.
- Working with Directorates with specific and focused recruitment campaigns such as 'Adults Always on', 'Indeed' coupled with engaging managers earlier on in the recruitment process fosters informal on-boarding of new recruits.
- Pre-employment checks have been reviewed and streamlined where appropriate and safe, such as the removal of medical screening by default for all positions.
- Supporting specific grant funded recruitment campaigns for efficient and timely turnaround, such as the Children's Social Work Academy.

- More recently there has been learning from prior senior recruitment, with in-house assessment centre facilitation to reduce spend on the commissioning of external expertise.
- 3.22 Further developments are taking place to enhance Halton's branding and Employer Value proposition with the HR Operations Division working in partnership with the Transformation Delivery Unit to promote the Council becoming an employer of choice. This also includes enhanced succession planning within the organisation (aligned with the Council's Organisational Development Strategy).
- 3.23 In addition to the above, the Council continues to be engaged in a strategic programme of work with the other five LCR Council's, headed up by the Chief Executive of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, designed to consider the high level challenge of resourcing the local government sector more generally in the short, medium and long-term.
- 3.24 Considering all of the above points and the challenge of continuing to deliver services, where managers of Council services cannot achieve their desired outcome through the normal recruitment route, either because no viable candidates are presented or because their request is in a queue, alternative means of resourcing are sought. One of these is the engagement of an agency worker.
- 3.25 The use of agency workers has been a route available to managers for several years. Peripheral resourcing is generally accepted as a good HR and management practice to fill short term gaps. The Council has a procured contract with a neutral vendor (MatrixSCM) to procure agency workers as efficiently as possible.
- 3.26 In 2015/16, the Council's Management Team directed that a review of agency worker usage should be undertaken as part of the Council's Efficiency Programme. At that time spend was circa £4.5m p.a. In 2016/17, following the implementation of more robust controls and processes spend reduced to £2.2m.
- 3.27 Spend in the financial year 2022/2023 reached £13.8m. Of this £8.5m has been through the Matrix contract, with the remainder being off-contract spend. The off contract spend occurs for a number of reasons; namely the requirement cannot be fulfilled through the Matrix contract, or the requirement sits within a legacy arrangement that came into the Council as part of the inward transfer of care homes (TUPE).
- 3.28 The obvious option is to reduce reliance on agency workers, however for the reasons outlined in this report above, this is a challenging task.

Nevertheless, this reduction in reliance and the stabilising of the Council's permanent workforce is identified as a key corporate priority to be pursued throughout the remainder of 2023/24. Furthermore work is currently being undertaken to on board care homes onto Matrix to reduce off contract agency spend.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 As the options and considerations outlined in the report above are pursued, there may be a requirement to amend one or more Council policy. Should this be the case, that amendment will take place in line with prescribed Council procedure.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As outlined in the report above, there are several financial influences present. The existence of large numbers of vacancies has the potential to reduce spend overall, however the need to fulfil service demand shifts that funding to other resourcing options – such as agency worker engagement.
- 5.2 There are potential cost implications attached to the options outlined at 3.22 above. These will however be considered on a case by case basis within the context of return on investment and more effective engagement of quality candidates at an earlier stage.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Adequately resourcing the services that contribute to this corporate priority with the right calibre and level of skill and ability is an important element of the Council's approach to resourcing.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Adequately resourcing the services that contribute to this corporate priority with the right calibre and level of skill and ability is an important element of the Council's approach to resourcing.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Adequately resourcing the services that contribute to this corporate priority with the right calibre and level of skill and ability is an important element of the Council's approach to resourcing.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Adequately resourcing the services that contribute to this corporate priority with the right calibre and level of skill and ability is an important element of the Council's approach to resourcing.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Adequately resourcing the services that contribute to this corporate priority with the right calibre and level of skill and ability is an important element of the Council's approach to resourcing.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 This report illustrates that a key risk to the Council currently is the under-resourcing of services as a result of failure to attract and retain suitably qualified and skilled employees. Such under-resourcing leads to sub-optimal service delivery and demand going un-met.

7.2 To a certain extent, risk is mitigated by the use of peripheral workforce (agency), however the wrong balance between agency to permanent workforce leads to additional expense and may result in lower levels of coherence within teams and services. As such, it is imperative that this usage is reduced to acceptable levels.

7.3 The risks that have emerged as a result of changing labour market dynamics are recorded and monitored through the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken on any new policy as a direct result of any specific action plan implementation, if required.

8.2 The Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) outlined in the Equality Act 2010. PSED requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. This includes the recruitment and employment of staff.

- 8.3 In respect of the issues covered in this report, the Council has robust measures in place to ensure that discrimination has no place within its recruitment and employment procedures. The approach is based on competency, regardless of an individual having one or more of the 'relevant protected characteristics' outlined in the legislation (these being - age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation). The Council also has a voluntary protected characteristic pertinent to 'carer' status.
- 8.4 The Council is an accredited 'Disability Confident Leader' and has been since 2019. Employment practices form part of the assessment.
- 8.5 It is appreciated that socio-economic influences continue to change the profile of communities. In view of this, and in the process of reviewing and revising the Council's approach to recruitment marketing and attracting potential employees, regard will be given to how we may more effectively engage with potential employees within the protected characteristic groups.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

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

10.1 None

Appendix 1

Recruitment summary across Council Services – 2022/23

Service Area	Positions
Administration Shared Services	39
Administration Officer	23
Clerical Officer	10
Senior Administration Officer	5
Team Support Manager	1
Audit and Operational Finance	2
Audit and Investigations Manager	1
Recovery Officer	1
Care Homes	23
Assistant Manager - Care Homes	1
Care and Support Worker - Days	1
Care and Support Worker - Nights	1
Care Assistant	5
Care Assistant - Days	2
Care Assistant - Nights	1
General Assistant	2
Nurse Consultant	1
Registered Manager- St Lukes Care Home	1
Registered Nurse	1
Registered Nurse - Days	3
Registered Nurse - Nights	3
Senior Care Assistant Nights	1
Care Management	29
Advanced Social Worker - Complex Care	1
Community Care Worker	15
Kitchen Assistant	1
Social Worker	6
Social worker - Complex Care	2
Social Worker (Continuing Health Care)	2
Social Worker (Prevention and Assessment)	2
Children In Care Services	12
Admissions Officer	1
Casual Residential Child Care Worker	4
Practice Lead - Children In Care	1
Residential Child Care Worker	2
Social Worker - Foster Care	3
Social Worker (Children in Care/Care Leavers)	1
Children In Need and Child Protection	9
Senior Community Support Worker	1
Social Worker (Children in Need)	6

Social Worker- Contact and Referral Team	1
Social Worker- Disabled Children Services	1
Children's Safeguarding	2
Conference and Reviewing Manager	1
Specialist Teaching Assistant - Sensory Impairment	1
Commissioning	40
Assistant Behaviour Analyst	12
Casual Support Worker - Day Services	16
Day Services Officer	8
Housing Solutions Advisor	1
Practice Manager - Positive Behaviour Service	1
Principal Manager	1
Senior Behaviour Analyst	1
Community	61
Behaviour Practitioner	2
Casual Support Worker - Halton Supported Housing	12
Support Worker - Day Services	7
Support Worker - Halton Supported Housing	40
Contact Centre	1
Contact Centre Advisor	1
Early Years Team	1
Early Years Complex Needs Support Worker	1
Education and School Improvement	4
Education Data Analyst	1
School and Setting Improvement Officer	3
Employment, Learning and Skills	57
Adult Learning and Skills IT Tutor	1
Advisor	2
Advisor (Employment Coach - JETS Programme)	1
Advisor (Restart Programme)	22
Advisor/Key Worker	2
Apprenticeship Support Skills Broker	1
Employment Liaison Officer	6
ESF Funding Development Officer	3
Information and Data Manager	1
Information Data & Support Officer	4
JETS Programme Team Leader	1
Quality and Learner Experience Manager	1
Restart Programme Self-employment Advisor	2
Support Internship Job Coach	2
Team Leader - Restart Programme	5
Vocational & Employability Trainer	2
Work and Health Programme Team Leader	1
Environmental Health	1
Environmental Health Officer	1

Financial Management	12
Finance and Budget Management Officer	1
Finance Officer	2
Purchase to Pay Officer	1
Rating Officer	1
Revenues Officer	4
School Finance Officer	2
Senior Finance Officer	1
Halton Direct Link	16
One Stop Shop Officer	9
One Stop Shop Officer - Internal	6
One Stop Shop Team Leader	1
Hardware and Software Development	2
Senior Administrator ICT (EUC-Service Desk)	1
Senior Administrator-ICT (Data Centre)	1
Highways	2
Senior Engineer- Highway Schemes & Major Maintenance	2
Inclusion 0-25 Service and Special Educational Needs	13
Assistant Educational Psychologist	2
Casual Home Tutor	3
Education Welfare Officer	1
Educational Psychologist	2
PEP Lead for Children In Care - Primary	2
PEP Lead for Children In Care - Secondary	1
SENDSTART Team Manager	1
Senior Educational Psychologist	1
Independent Living	2
Care and Support Worker - Nights	2
Intermediate Care	1
Assistant Manager - Intermediate Care	1
Investment and Development	7
Business Improvement & Growth Officer	1
Principal Surveyor	2
Project Officer (Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plus)	1
Project Support Officer	1
Regeneration Project Officer	1
Surveyor	1
Legal Services	2
Licensing Manager	1
Licensing Officer	1
Leisure Services	53
Casual Centre Assistant	2
Casual Fitness Advisor	2
Casual Leisure Attendant	10
Casual Operations Manager	5

Casual Receptionist	6
Casual Swimming Instructor	9
Centre Assistant	1
Divisional Manager - Leisure Services	1
Leisure Attendant	15
Receptionist - Kingsway Leisure Centre	1
Receptionist - Brookvale Recreation Centre	1
Library Services	9
Area Manager (Libraries)	2
Library Floor Manager	3
Library Information Assistant	4
Logistics	8
Casual Client Driver/Attendant	6
Reception Officer (Transport)	1
Shift Mechanic	1
Mental Health	10
Advanced Social Worker	4
Housing Solutions Offender Coordinator	1
Social Worker	3
Support Worker - Women's Centre	2
Open Space Services	20
Apprentice Registration Officer	2
Casual Civil Ceremonies Celebrant	3
Casual Worker - Open Space Service	8
Cemetery Worker	1
Compliance Officer	1
Park Worker	2
Streetscene Worker	3
Place, Planning and Provision	1
Youth Justice Service Education Worker	1
Policy, People, Performance and Efficiency	7
Apprentice Resourcing Officer	1
Business Performance Officer	1
Casual Children's Health Trainer	2
Organisational Development & Performance Support Assistant	1
Payroll Reconciliation Officer	1
Recruitment & Resourcing Officer	1
Prevention and Assessment	18
Advanced Practitioner	6
Commissioning & Development Manager	1
Customer Care Officer	1
HSAB Support Officer	1
Occupational Therapist	1
Practice Manager	4
Principal Manager	1

Senior Service Development Officer	1
Service Development Officer	1
Social Worker	1
Property Services	18
Caretaker	1
Casual Cleaner	4
Casual Cleaner Plus	1
Cleaner	7
Cleaner Plus	4
Facilities Management Building Officer	1
Public Health	38
Advanced Project Support Officer	1
Breastfeeding Support Worker	3
Casual Breastfeeding Support Worker	2
Consultant in Public Health	4
Director of Public Health	1
Graduate Environmental Health Practitioner/ Environmental Health Officer	2
Health Check Officer	2
Health Improvement Practitioner - Feeding Halton	1
Health Improvement Practitioner - Stop Smoking	2
Health Improvement Specialist	4
Information Officer (Sure Start to Later Life)	1
Interim Director of Public Health	1
Lifestyle Advisor	5
Pest Control Operative	1
Pest Control Team Leader	1
Practice Manager - Health Improvement (Adult Healthy Lifestyles)	1
Practice Manager - Health Improvement (Start Well)	1
Project Officer - Testing (Public Health)	1
Public Health Intelligence Officer	2
Specialist Dietician	1
Specialist Dietitian	1
Pupil & Teaching Support	1
Early Years Complex Needs Support Worker	1
Revenues and Benefits	1
Benefits Officer	1
School Meals Catering	58
Assistant Cook	1
Catering Supervisor	8
Kitchen Assistant	47
Mobile Catering Supervisor	1
School Meals Assistant Manager	1
Service Improvement	3
Senior Technical Officer	1

Systems Analyst (Client Applications - Care)	2
Sport and Recreation	11
Casual Centre Assistant	8
Centre Assistant	2
Community Sports Coach	1
Stadium and Catering Services	10
Casual Stadium General Assistant	9
Grounds and Maintenance Officer	1
Team Around The Family / Locality Services	28
Carers Assessment and Support Officer	1
Children & Families Early Years Worker	3
Children and Young Peoples Tracking Services Officer	1
Deputy Day Care Manager	1
Early Help Family Worker	10
Early Help Officer	2
Early Help Parenting Co-ordinator	1
Early Years Practitioner	5
Head of Behaviour Support	1
Senior Early Help Officer	3
Traffic, Risk and Emergency Planning, Health and Safety	7
School Crossing Operative	7
Urgent Care	1
Advanced Practitioner	1
Waste and Environmental Services	12
Casual Centre Assistant	3
Centre Assistant	1
Community Engagement Officer	1
Environment Project Assistant	1
Waste and Recycling Driver/Chargehand	2
Waste and Recycling Operative	4
(blank)	16
Chief Executive	1
Chief Executive (Mersey Gateway Environmental Trust)	1
Commissioning Manager	1
Community Bridge Builder	2
Community Learning Disability Nurse	3
Conservation Officer (Mersey Gateway Environmental Trust)	1
Early Years Officer: Data Analyst	1
Non-Executive Director (Mersey Gateway Crossings Board)	1
One Halton - Project Manager	2
One Halton - Senior Programme Manager	1
Operational Director - Community & Environment	1
Programme Manager (Halton and Warrington PMO)	1
Grand Total	668

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 7 November 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Household Support Fund 2023/24

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide an update regarding delivery of the Government's Household Support Fund allocation of £2.6m from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

2.0 RECOMMENDED That:

- (i) **Progress with delivery of the Household Support Fund, as outlined in the report, be noted;**
- (ii) **A further progress report be brought to the next meeting of the Board.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 3.1 On 20th April 2023 the Executive Board approved a Spending Plan regarding how the £2.6m grant allocation might be utilised, and this was reported to the Board on 6th June 2023.
- 3.2 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has issued guidance that includes the requirement that part of the funding must be distributed via an application process. However, the Council can still proactively target particular groups of households.

Spending Plan

- 3.3 A spending plan was prepared, as set out in the Appendix A, regarding how the grant funding might be utilised via a combination of Council departments and voluntary sector partners, to deliver help and assistance to vulnerable households over the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.
- 3.4 In order to meet the requirement to operate part of the scheme on an application basis, it was agreed 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 To assist vulnerable households with children, free school meal vouchers of £12 per week will be provided to approximately 7,500 eligible pupils during the school holidays. It is estimated that the free school meals vouchers will cost approximately £1,170,000 in total.
- 3.6 To support vulnerable pensioner households, it has been decided that all pensioners currently receiving council tax reduction (CTR) will be provided with a one-off award of £120. It is estimated that 4,181 pensioner households on CTR will benefit from this award, at a total cost of £501,720.
- 3.7 Public Health have been allocated £100,000 to target support at vulnerable households who may fall outside those categories covered by the rest of the spending plan. In addition Public Health will also provide support to families who have pre-school age children, and are flagged on the Income Deprivation Index affecting children. Public Health have been allocated £82,126 for this particular project.
- 3.8 An allocation of £82,127 has been made to Children's Services to assist care leavers with the following: energy bill support; household packs to help with keeping warm, saving energy and cooking; and emergency food and hygiene packs.
- 3.9 The remaining grant funding has been allocated to a number of Voluntary Sector Partners to assist other vulnerable households as detailed in Appendix A.

Progress Update

- 3.10 At the end of September 2023 expenditure from the Household Support Fund is relatively low because the £120 payment for pensioners is not being paid until October 2023, and it is estimated the spend will be £501,000. In addition assistance for pre-school age children will be made in the winter as will the support to be provided for care leavers.
- 3.11 Seven weeks of free school meal vouchers have been issued for the summer half term and the summer holidays totalling spend of £616,104. The Discretionary Support Scheme have also made awards to the value of £87,053.
- 3.12 Appendix B details the spend for the period 1st April 2023 – 30th September 2023 that also includes expenditure from partner organisations including Halton Citizens Advice Bureau, Runcorn Foodbank, Widnes Foodbank, Affordable Warmth, Holiday Activity Food programme, and Halton Voluntary Action.
- 3.13 A further progress report regarding delivery of the Household Support Fund will be presented to the Board on 23rd January 2024.

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 identified.

5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None identified.

5.3 A Healthy Halton

None identified.

5.4 A Safer Halton

None identified.

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 31st March 2024, any remaining grant funding will be clawed back by the DWP. The Spending Plan presented in the Appendix A is intended to ensure that the grant funding is fully utilised by the deadline.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
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**Household Support Fund
Spending Plan 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024**

Total grant allocation	£ 2,595,761
Less administration costs (5%)	129,788
Total Available grant funding	2,465,973
1. Vulnerable Households with Children	1,170,000
<p>Free school meal vouchers for school holidays: Summer half term 29th May 2023 – 2nd June 2023 (1 week) Summer holidays 20th July 2023 – 1st September 2023 (6 weeks) Autumn half term 30th October 2023 – 3rd November 2023 (1 week) Christmas holidays 22nd Dec 2023 – 2nd Jan 2024 (2 weeks) Spring half term 12th – 16th February 2024 (1 week) Easter holidays 29th March 2024 – 12th April 2024 (2 weeks)</p> <p>Based on estimated 7,500 children entitled to FSM Paid for 13 weeks £12 voucher per week</p>	
2. Vulnerable Pensioner Households	501,720
<p>Based on 4,181 pensioner households receiving CTR/HB Award £120 per pensioner</p>	
3. Discretionary Support Scheme	356,000
<p>By application Based on HSF3 allocation for 6 months of £178,000.</p>	
4. Public Health	100,000
<p>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>	
5. Public Health	84,126
<p>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>	
6. Care Leavers	84,127
<p>To make cost of living awards to recent care leavers and to those</p>	

young people who will become care leavers in the next 12 months.	
7. Other Vulnerable Households – HSF3 amount doubled	
Halton CAB	80,000
Widnes Food Bank	20,000
Runcorn Food Bank	20,000
Holiday Activity Food programme	10,000
Affordable Warmth – Energy Projects Plus	20,000
Halton Voluntary Action	20,000
Total Planned Spending	2,465,973

APPENDIX B

Household Support Fund

Actual Spend for the period 1st April 2023 – 30th September 2023

Total Available grant allocation	£ 2,465,973
1. Vulnerable Households with children	
Free school meal vouchers provided for: Summer half term and summer holidays	616,104
2. Vulnerable Pensioner Households	
To pay in October 2023	0
3. Discretionary Support Scheme	
Spend	87,053
4. Public Health	
Spend	6,529
5. Public Health – pre-school age	
To commence spend in the winter 2023	0
6. Care Leavers	
To commence spend in the winter 2023	0
7. Other vulnerable households	
Citizens Advice Bureau	14,219
Widnes Foodbank	20,000
Runcorn Foodbank	11,126
Holiday Activity Food programme	8,709
Affordable Warmth – Energy Projects Plus	4,100
Halton Voluntary Action	7,018
Total Actual Spend to 30th September 2023	774,858

REPORT TO:	Corporate Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	7 th November 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Chief Executive
SUBJECT:	Performance Management Reports for Quarter 2 of 2023/24
WARDS:	Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider, and to raise any questions or points of clarification, in respect of performance management for the second quarter period to 30th September 2023.
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2023-24 were agreed by Members for the various functional areas reporting to the Board as detailed below:
 - Finance
 - Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit
 - ICT and Administrative Support
 - Legal and Democracy
 - Catering, Stadium and Registration Services
 - Property Services

The report details progress made against objectives and milestones and performance targets and provides information relating to key developments and emerging issues that have arisen during the period.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Policy and Performance Board

- 1) Receive the second quarter performance management report;**
- 2) Consider the progress and performance information and raise any questions or points for clarification; and**
- 3) Highlight any areas of interest and/or concern where further information is to be reported at a future meeting of the Board.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Departmental objectives provide a clear statement on what services are planning to achieve and to show how they contribute to the Council's strategic priorities. Such information is central to the Council's performance management arrangements and the Policy and Performance Board has a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no other implications associated with this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Departmental service objectives and performance measures are linked to the delivery of the Council's priorities. The identification of business critical objectives/ milestones and performance indicators will further support organisational improvement.

6.2 Although some objectives link specifically to one priority area, the nature of the cross - cutting activities being reported, means that to a greater or lesser extent a contribution is made to one or more of the Council priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 At the time at which Annual Business Plans are developed Directorate Risk Registers are also refreshed and updated.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Not applicable.

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

Not applicable

Corporate Policy and Performance Board– Priority Based Monitoring Report Q2

Reporting Period: 01st July to 30th Sept 2023

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress against key service objectives/milestones and performance targets, during the second quarter of 2023/24 for service areas within the remit of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board.
- 1.2 It covers key priorities for development or improvement in the various functional areas reporting to the Board in relation to the Council's priority of Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency i.e.:
 - Financial Services
 - Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit
 - ICT Infrastructure
 - Legal and Democracy
 - Catering, Stadium and Registration Services
 - Property Services
- 1.3 The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress to date is explained within Section 8 of this report.

2.0 Key Developments

- 2.1 There have been a number of developments during the period which include:-

Financial Services

2.2 Benefits Division

Processing Times

At 30th September 2023 processing times for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction were as follows: new claims 24.97 days and changes in circumstances 20.05 days.

Department for Works and Pensions - Data Share Memorandum of Understanding

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) share claimant data with the Council's Benefit Service relating to new claims for DWP benefits and changes in circumstances. This helps the Council administer housing benefit and council tax reduction claims, and the DWP passes this information to the Council on a daily basis. As part of the of data sharing process the Council have to sign an annual Memorandum of Understanding with the DWP to confirm that it is complying with a number of safeguards relating to the security and integrity of information that the DWP transfers to the Council. Currently the DWP is undertaking an audit of all local authorities in England and Wales with regards to the terms and conditions of the data share memorandum of understanding, and Halton is providing evidence demonstrating that it is adhering to the requirements of the memorandum of understanding.

Universal Credit Implementation

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) statistics indicate at 10th August 2023 there were 16,138 people within Halton claiming Universal Credit. The table below shows the Universal Credit caseload in Halton on a quarterly basis over the past 17 months.

Universal Credit caseload	
Date	Caseload
1 st April 2022	15,262
30 th June 2022	15,283
30 th September 2022	15,533
31 st December 2022	15,581
31 st March 2023	15,817
11 th May 2023	15,969
8 th June 2023	16,057
13 th July 2023	16,072
10 th August 2023	16,138

2.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

Supplier Invoice Processing Performance

At the end of Quarter 2, 91.32% of all supplier invoices paid in 2023/24 had been settled within 30 days. This represents an improvement on 2022/23 performance despite the Purchase to Pay Team continuing to operate at reduced capacity since the start of the year.

Insurance tender

The Council is to retender a range of insurance policies which are due to expire on 31 March 2024. All available contract extensions have been taken up on the Council's combined liability, medical malpractice, and engineering policies. The Council therefore has no option but to go out to tender for these policies. The motor vehicle, property and computer policies are at the end of their initial three-year contract terms. Extension options are available. However, the Council's insurance broker, has advised that the Council may achieve a better overall outcome if all the Council's main policies are retendered at the same time. This can be more attractive to insurers as it spreads out their risk if they hold all the Council's policies.

The Council's Procurement Team and insurance broker will support the tender process, which will be conducted in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015. A competitive tender exercise will be undertaken using a Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation framework. This framework is widely used by local authorities for insurance services. The Council's broker has advised that it is a difficult market at present for various reasons (inflation, increasing loss costs, global tensions, slow supply chain recovery), and are therefore advising that the Council budgets prudently for an increase in premium of between 5% and 10% on 2023/24 premiums. The outcome of the tender exercise is likely to be known towards the end of February 2024.

Adult Social Care – Financial Assessments

Work is continuing to provide adult social care service clients with the facility to complete their financial assessment applications via a secure online portal. The system is easy to use and includes a range of animations to explain to the individual why certain questions are being asked. Providing this reasoning, especially around some of the financial questions, helps to take away the worry many service users currently experience when being asked to share personal information. The portal will give an instant indication to the user about how much they would need pay towards a care package. Providing this upfront estimate allows the service user to make a much more informed decision when considering their care options. Assistance with completing the online form will be given to anyone that requires it.

The system is currently in the final stages of testing. It is anticipated that a phased roll out of the system will commence in the next couple of months. The following link will be provided on the Council's website for clients to access prior to the new system live. It provides a short

video explaining how the financial assessment process will work [Online financial assessment process](#).

2.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

2023/24 Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring

For the financial year to 30 June 2023, overall Council operational net spending was £29.4m against a budget of £27.2m, resulting in an overspend position to date against budget of £2.2m. The forecast position for the year to 31 March 2024 was an estimated overspend of £8.4m.

Capital spending at 30 June 2023 totalled £9.6m, which is 90% of the planned spending of £10.7m at this stage. This represents 17% of the total Capital Programme of £56.2m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years).

The updated financial forecast and picture of net spending to 30 September 2023 will be reported to Executive Board on 16 November 2023.

2022/23 Statement of Accounts

The draft version of the 2022/23 Statement was published on the Council's website on Wednesday 04 July 2023. The Council's external auditor Grant Thornton UK LLP has commenced the audit of the accounts, the aim being to finalise the audit by the end of December and report the Audit Findings Report to the Audit & Governance Board on 20 March 2024.

Council Tax and Business Rate Collection

Council tax collection for the first half of the year is 53.9%, down 0.52% on this point last year. Cash collection for the year to date is £42.4m, this includes £1.3m collected in relation to previous year debt.

Business rates collection for the first half of the year is 56.4%, down by 5.2% on this point last year. Cash collected for the year to date is £34.1m, this includes £0.7m collected in relation to previous year debt.

2.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

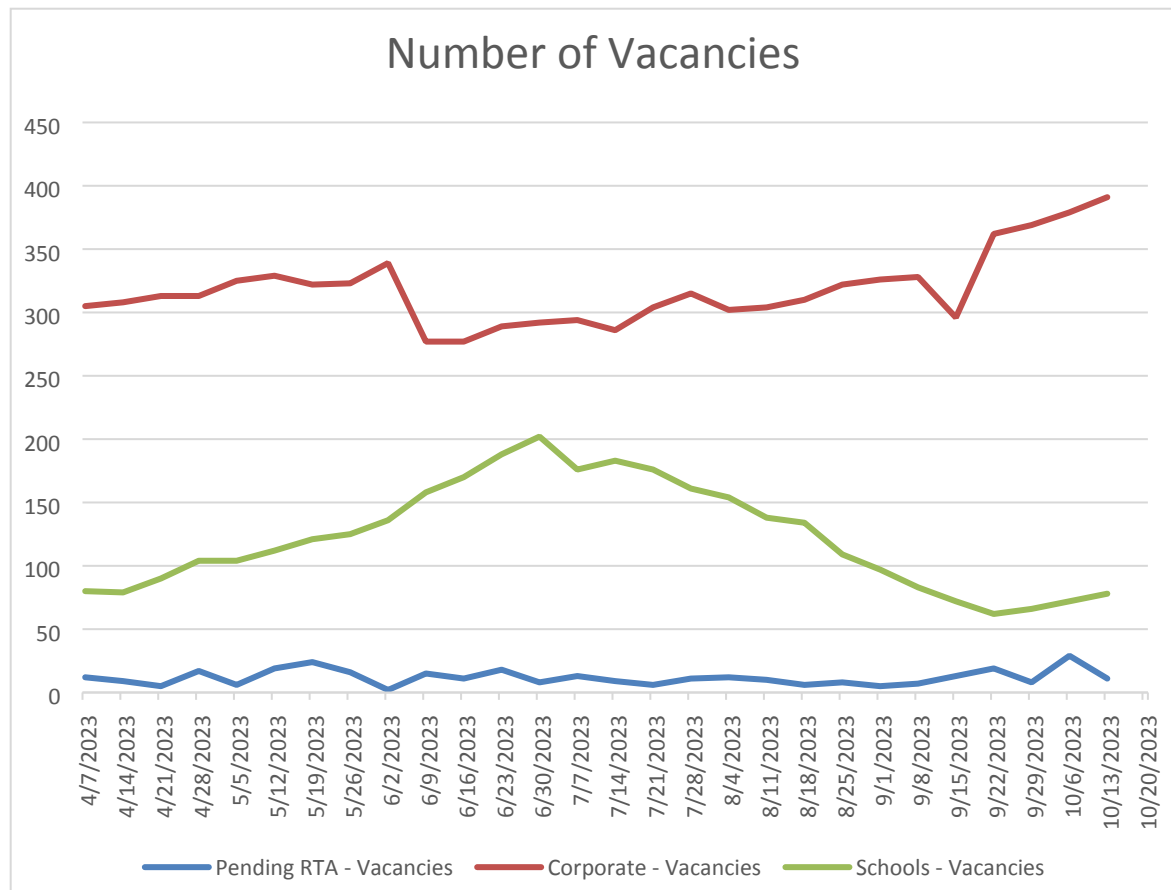
Three services within the HR Operations Division (Resourcing & Recruitment, Payroll & Pensions and Employment Relations) remain under significant pressure in the current year. Additional demand persists across all areas. The new service configuration of HR Operations (Resourcing & Recruitment, Payroll & Pensions and Employment Relations, Health and Safety) is working collaboratively to deliver what is now required by the wider Council. This is informed by work within the Transformation programme together with business as usual.

The Employment Relations Team has been restructured to implement a HR Business Partnering Model that will be effective towards the end of Quarter 3, with recruitment to a remaining vacant post taking place.

Despite significant challenges in terms of volume, the service has delivered positive results across the recruitment and initial pay administration of a large number of new recruits across Halton schools in time for the start of the new academic year as well as successfully managing to avoid impact on corporate recruitment during the busy school recruitment period.

The Division has supported the Children’s Directorate to recruit to the vacancies of Executive Director Children’s (DCS) and Operational Director Children’s Social Care. Furthermore the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration and Operational Director Economy, Enterprise & Property required senior recruitment processes to run and complete. Three successful appointments were secured and delivered collaboratively with North West Employers with one taking place solely in house.

Recruitment demand remains consistently high. With the school recruitment push at an end, we are seeing a significant upswing in demand for the processing of corporate vacancies, as can be seen in the graph below:



At the time of writing, there are 391 Council vacancies in the recruitment workflow inclusive of usual recruitment, ‘Adults Always On’ recruitment, and an ‘Indeed’ campaign. In addition, there are 78 school vacancies in progress.

Tough labour market conditions continue to bring challenges in the resourcing of many service areas across the organisation. To continue to address the consistent issue, resourcing workflows remain continuously under review. A trial was carried on of an ‘indeed’ campaign to work on quick turnaround recruitment adapting to the labour market which is currently progressing 51 vacancies with 5 in pre-checks currently taking place.

The Communications and Marketing service continues to support a range of organisational initiatives, including the Reimagine Halton Transformation Programme, with a current focus on staff engagement through a series of ‘Chats about Change’; also continuing support for projects within the programme, including the current recruitment drive to posts within Children’s Services and upcoming recruitment to support Accelerated Growth. Elsewhere, following a successful launch of the first Family Hubs in Widnes, the service is actively supporting the launch of the Runcorn Family Hub, while developing plans to progress the roll out of the family hub model across the borough. Interviews for the vacant Communications

Officer post will take place on 19 October, which, subject to appointment, will increase capacity within the team.

2.6 ICT and Administration

The key development of note this quarter has been the **disaggregation of the central administrative service**.

As noted within the emerging issues with the Q1 report the considerable project of the disaggregation of the Shared Administrative Support Service was initiated with the objective of moving all staff out of the centre to then be placed within individual teams and services. This disaggregation removes the central control of all staffing within the service and releases the management responsibility back into the directorates.

The proposed 'to be' operating model now will allow services to be 'responsible for their own administration processes.

It was proposed to transfer the management of existing administration team members directly to the managers of the service areas they currently support.

To make savings identified within the analysis of the current operating model, a number of managerial roles have now been disestablished, these managerial responsibilities will pass to service managers.

The majority of administration staff will stay within their existing substantive post reporting to their existing administration line manager (currently HBC4 senior administration officer).

The objective of the approach taken by the project team within the service was that of minimal disruption of the day-to-day tasks currently undertaken by administration staff, administration staff currently receive daily task requests from service personnel, and this will continue.

As noted service managers will now be responsible for their own administration resource and will be able to manage that resource in their own way according to the current and future requirements of their service.

Each Executive Director within the newly developed executive officer structure will receive full time support from a dedicated Personal Assistant, the current executive level support structure contains limited FTE equivalent posts arising from historic agreements with previous post holders, this structure is no longer fit for purpose and was subject to a previously agreed management team report and has now taken place.

Service managers will be responsible for directing and monitoring the work of their own administration resource.

Service managers will be responsible for recruiting and training their own administration staff.

Arranging sickness and holiday absence cover for administration staff will be the responsibility of service managers.

All sickness, welfare, disciplinary, time recording, mileage claim, expense claim and staff induction processes relating to administration staff will be the responsibility of service managers.

Improvements to administrative processes to increase efficiency will be the responsibility of service managers to identify, develop and deploy.

The table below defines the dates of transfer and subsequent removal of the association between the central service and the directorates associated.

Team	Target Transfer Date	Trajectory
Children's Centre Reception staff	01/10/2023	Transfer completed
Education	01/10/2023	Transfer completed
CICCL/AFS	01/10/2023	Transfer completed
Adult Social Care	01/11/2023	Transfer date agreed
iCART	01/11/2023	Transfer date agreed
Children's Safeguarding	01/11/2023	Transfer date agreed
CIN	01/11/2023	Transfer planning in progress
RTH and Municipal Reception staff	01/12/2023	Transfer planning in progress
Ground Floor Municipal	01/12/2023	Transfer planning in progress
Central Admin	01/12/2023	Transfer planning in progress
Stadium	01/12/2023	Transfer date agreed

This has been a considerable undertaking carried out by the service to smoothly initiate and control this level of change for a service that has successfully saved the authority millions of pounds in reduced spend over the period of its delivery tenure, the efforts of the teams and associated management should be noted.

The Customer Journey: A newly initiated transformation programme aimed at defining and improving the associated customer experience for both internal as well as external users of council services. The programme will have the primary objective of improving the initial contact and service delivery options open to residents inclusive of Face to Face, Telephone and Digital means. This also should be focused upon challenging, improving and developing upon internal process and the delivery of services administratively and well as through qualified expert service.

2.7 Legal and Democracy

In July, the Council received notification from the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) of its intention to carry out an inspection of our arrangements for ensuring compliance with the Regulations of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

IPCO submitted a series of questions which were answered in detail by Legal Services. The response proved satisfactory to IPCO, who were content with the Council's arrangements. A revised RIPA policy, which was already being worked on, was submitted to and approved by Executive Board in September.

Recruitment of a new Taxi Licensing Enforcement Officer was successfully carried out in Quarter 2, and the postholder is already proving to be a valued member of the team.

An appointment has been made to one of the 2 vacant Child Care Solicitors posts, and the successful candidate will be joining the team shortly.

2.8 Catering - School Meals

As a result of schools being notified that from the 31 March 2025 Halton will no longer be providing a catering provision, we have seen a number of schools make enquiries regarding TUPE transfer to alternative catering providers. Two schools will be leaving Halton Catering service from November 2023.

Two alternative providers presented their offering directly to schools at two separate open days hosted at the Stadium.

2.9 Stadium

The stadium management team continue to engage with the Transformation team in reimagining the Stadium, its commercial viability and sustainability.

Key performances indicators are in the process of being developed along with the associated data collection systems.

These will be focused on stadium usage/occupancy and customer satisfaction. The initial data received on the customer satisfaction surveys reads as follows.

- 89% of returns rated the stadium in terms of 'Quality of Venue' between 4 and 5 stars.
- 93% of returns rated the stadium in terms of 'Quality of Catering' between 4 and 5 stars.
- 89% of returns said they would likely or very likely use the stadium again.
- 84% of customers would likely or very likely recommend the stadium to others.

(1 star being very poor and 5 stars being excellent)

Overall, 79% of customers rated the stadium very good or excellent.

The recently purchased event stage, canopy, sound & lighting system was utilised for the inaugural newly branded 'Live & Direct' events.

The test event saw 4 local artists perform in front of a packed crowd receiving praise from all the artists involved along with a positive news story from the international All Music Magazine - *"a perfect start to this new venue here at Halton Stadium", "and it has a feel very similar to a smaller O2 Academy venue."*

Following the success of this event we are in the process of developing a programme of live music and entertainment events, utilising links with existing stakeholders, whilst also pursuing new relationships with promoters and artists.

2.10 Registration Services

The Registration Service is working with HBC ITC Service's, HBC Income and Stopford (an external Registration Management System provider) - to technically develop and allow online appointments for Births, Deaths, Marriage and Civil Partnerships. This use of automation in improving the customers journey is aligned with the "Reimagining Halton" transformation agenda. The Registration Service currently has a fulltime vacancy for a Senior Registration Officer, which is being advertised for a second time due to there being no suitable applicants so far.

2.11 Property Services (Operations)

St Patrick's Nursing Home Redevelopment

Design development works ongoing in respect of proposals to build a new 16 bed extension and refurbish the remaining accommodation. Works planned to be carried out in 2 phases with an estimated works cost of £2.6m. Planning application submitted. Now looking at options to decarbonise the building as part of the scheme and in respect of this we are intending to submit a bid for additional funding to the government's decarbonisation fund, which opens on October 10th.

St Luke's Nursing Home Refurbishment

Design development works ongoing in respect of proposals to refurbish existing accommodation in 4 phases, estimated works cost of £1.1m. Now looking at options to decarbonise the building as part of the scheme and in respect of this we are intending to submit a bid for additional funding to the government's decarbonisation fund, which opens on October 10th.

Proposed New Leisure Centre Moor Lane

The contract start date was 9th January 2023, works are progressing well, the reduced dig is complete, foundations and drainage now installed the steelwork is erected, the ground works to the pool hall is being carried out and the roof sheeting is being installed. Works are on programme, contractual completion date is 3rd February 2025.

Camden Buildings, High Street- refurb to create digital/creative hub (57-59)

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022, the design has now progressed to RIBA stage 4, and the project is now out to tender, with a return date of October 22nd. It is anticipated that a start on site will be made in the New Year. An initial soft strip together with some enabling works has now been completed this being required ahead of the main works starting on site.

Camden Buildings, High Street- refurb to create digital/creative hub (63-65)

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022, the design has now progressed to RIBA stage 3, and we are looking to move to stage 4 in due course. The purchase of 63 has now been completed so design works to 63/65 will recommence in the new financial year.

Brookvale Rec- Proposed Refurbishment works

A feasibility study has been received ; Consideration in respect of the most appropriate course of action is currently being considered by the Sports Development team.

Pickering Pastures- Proposed new pavilion building

The feasibility report has been updated to reflect the increasing costs, the budget estimate for the project is £520k. Executive board approval was obtained in April to proceed with the project. Works are now being progressed in respect of preparing the planning application, which will be submitted in due course.

Cavendish School - 2 class extension

Works are on site and progressing well, anticipated completion is February 2024.

The Brindley- Proposed extension

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022, following which design development has now progressed through RIBA stage 4. The preferred option has been agreed with a budget cost estimate of £5.6m. Planning approval has been obtained. Works are now progressing with preparing the tender documentation, project to be tendered via the Chest in due course, anticipated start on site is late January.

Runcorn Library redevelopment

Design development works ongoing to create an NHS Health & Education hub. RIBA stage is now complete and we are now preparing to proceed with the design to RIBA stage 4, the budget cost is £1.8m.

Elite House- Redevelopment

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022. We are currently working on securing an operator who will feed in to the design process in due course. The Town Deal funding is insufficient to carry out the desired scheme, as such there is a bid in to the combined Authority for additional funding, this can only be progressed however once an

operator is in place and the design developed. The RIBA stage 2 report has been issued, once an operator is in place the design will move to RIBA stage 3.

Changing Places Facilities

Funding has been secured for 3 Changing Places facilities which were originally planned to be in Victoria Park, Shopping City and the Stadium respectively. The works within the Stadium are now complete and the facility available for use. Planning approval has been obtained for the project in Victoria Park, the work is currently on site with an estimated completion towards the end of October. The project in Shopping City has stalled however due to the owners not committing to contributing to the funding therefore approval has now been obtained to install the facility in Halton Lea Library as an alternative, this tender was won by Parklands and the works have recently started on site with a completion due in early November.

Unit 10 Refurbishment

Works are complete other than the gas main by Cadent, though this has not affected handover of the internal work which is now complete. and Tarmac have now taken occupation following their own fit out work their own fit out.

Decarbonisation Projects

Funding bids are to be submitted in early October for decarbonisations works at both St Pat's and St Luke's care homes as previously mentioned, together with schemes at Runcorn Town Hall, Kingsway Learning Centre and Picow Farm depot, all with the intension of electrifying the heat and hot water provision and moving away from gas.

Education maintenance programme 2023/24

The 2023/24 Education maintenance programme was approved by Council in March. The programme consists of 13 separate projects with an estimated cost of circa £780k. The majority of the projects are now complete with only 3 projects outstanding, all of which will be completed by year end.

Corporate Maintenance programme 2023/24

The 2023/24 Corporate maintenance programme has been approved by the Asset Management Working Group. Circa 20 projects on the list, some now complete others at various stages of progress, the intension being all funding will be expended by year end.

Education SEMH Resource base projects

There are 6 schools where we are upgrading the facilities to create Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) resource bases for both KS1 & KS2 groups. 3 of the projects are now complete, at Oakfield, Victoria Road and Westfield Primaries, the 3 others at Astmoor, Ditton Nursey and Woodside are all to be complete by year-end.

3.0 Emerging Issues

3.1 A number of emerging issues have been identified during the period that will impact upon the work of services including:-

3.2 Finance - Benefits Division

Department for Works and Pensions – real time information

Every month the Council’s Benefit Service has to produce a file of its housing benefit caseload, which includes the claimant’s name and address, whether it is a new claim, or there has been a change of circumstance, or there has been no change, and then send it to the DWP. This information allows the DWP to measure a local authority’s performance in terms of how quickly (in days) it processes new claims and changes in circumstances. Over the last 6 months the DWP has been engaging with the software suppliers who provide council’s with their benefit systems and tasked them with making modifications to their systems to enable real time information to be supplied from the local authority benefit system to the DWP. From November 2023 the process of local authority’s providing real time housing benefit information to the DWP is going live nationally, and this will provide the DWP with up to date claimant information.

3.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

Transforming Public Procurement Bill

The Procurement Bill, which will reform the existing public sector procurement rules, is continuing to progress through Parliament. Once it has completed its passage and received Royal Assent, which should be within the next few weeks, there will then need to be secondary legislation (regulations) to bring some elements of the Bill and the wider regime into effect. Affected bodies, such as the Council, will be given a minimum of six months’ notice before ‘go-live’, which is currently anticipated to be in October 2024. Existing procurement legislation will apply until the new regime goes live and will also continue to apply to procurements started under the old rules. Guidance will be provided to practitioners to cover the transition from the old to the new regulations, and a comprehensive programme of learning and development will be available to support professionals to implement the changes.

As previously reported, it remains uncertain as to what extent the changes will impact on the Council’s procurement arrangements. However, it is important to note that the new regulations will only apply to above threshold (i.e. higher value) procurement activity. The majority of the Council’s procurement is below threshold and will therefore continue to be governed by the Council’s Procurement Standing Orders.

3.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

Enforcement Agent Fees

The Ministry of Justice have completed a review of the fees that can be recovered from debtors by enforcement agents (EAs) when using the procedures under the Taking Control of Goods Regulations 2013 and the Taking Control of Goods (Fees) Regulations 2014. The fees were introduced in 2014 by the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007.

Proposed uplift to the fees recoverable (subject to legislation being passed) under Regulation 4 of the Taking Control of Goods (Fees) Regulations 2014 Enforcement other than under a High Court Writ are as per the table below.

FEE STAGE	CURRENT FIXED FEE	5% UPLIFT
COMPLIANCE STAGE	£75	£79
ENFORCEMENT STAGE	£235	£247
SALE OR DISPOSAL STAGE	£110	£116

3.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

The 2023/24 pay award remains unresolved. The Unison industrial action ballot has closed, however other formal ballots are still taking place. Formal notification of the ballot outcomes at a national level have yet to be announced, therefore the pay award negotiations are still ongoing and the implementation of the pay award will be delayed until the 2024 calendar year. It should be noted that the level of pay increase although potentially matched with last year will put extreme pressure on the Council budget.

Use of agency workers continues to remain consistently high in the Council, particularly in Adults and Children's Services where labour market conditions remain extremely tight. This also relates to a consistently high number of vacancies in the staffing establishment (see recruitment update in Key Developments above). A dedicated workstream within the Transformation Programme is now focused on this business issue, adding challenge and capacity to operational service areas to seek solutions to bring usage and associated spend down, the 'indeed' campaign mentioned above being one stream of that work. Additionally there has been an Agency Contract Manager post created in HR Operations to support managers to reduce their agency usage where possible.

3.6 ICT

The previous report discussed the development of the **Microsoft Cloud journey** for the authority and the development of new ways of working through the use of new technologies and what is about to be a step change in the way IT or the Cloud Technology stack is delivered into and through the authority.

We talk about Office 365 and again as users we are focused upon the laptop's or the tablets, we use on a daily basis which is perfectly understandable. But it must be understood that the technologies we are now moving forward with are considerably more than that.

The technology divisions and the wider services linked to the department have redesigned the way in which the authority's data will be managed, the way in which its digital security will be dealt with, the way in which we access technologies.

With further projects looking to reduce the scale of the data centre footprint and the way in which the considerable and complex network that secures our daily access will work to simplify and develop new ways of working into the future.

The elephant in the room currently is when will Office 365 be launched within the authority and when will the newly contracted Dell laptop devices be released. It is important to remember when undertaking such considerable change everything else that supports the device and the use of a small element of the Microsoft Product set involves.

Over the last 12 months the teams have had to individually move peoples SharePoint sites and deal with the complexities of how data is shared within the authority in order to upgrade these sites and personal document libraries to the SharePoint online systems and the One Drive personal libraries. Thousands of libraries and over 1000 individual libraries have already been moved, with many more to go.

Over 2300 applications reside within current systems and a colossal amount of work is being undertaken to reduce and define those systems that will take us forward and essentially will work within the new environments.

As we all understand digital security is an essential element to any online strategy and before any devices are released this must be as controlled as we can make it for the security and safety of our clients and staff.

Finally, Telephony Skype for business have served the authority cost effectively in many iterations for over 14 years, the authority fully owned this product set and has maintained a low-cost solution not only for internal and external calls but this has operated within our contact centre dealing with Hundreds of Thousands of call annually. Add to this the complexity of hundreds of dedicated response groups and emergency lines for Social Care and all other services linked to a number range of over 5'000. The swap over to teams is not something we can complete overnight.

The small team linked to this project has made considerable efforts in lining all of this complexity together with a large number of associated projects and daily service demand.

The department aims to release a small number of devices to officers across the authority from November the 6th, this trial period will last approximately 2 weeks. The devices will be brought back in, and feedback will be analysed.

It is proposed by the 23rd November a larger scale trial will be released across key teams across Adults, Children's, Economy and the Chief Executives Directorate to analyse the final build. If everything goes to plan, then the wider training and deployment plan will be initiated Early in the new year together with new self-service platforms and support solutions.

Project delivery updates will be detailed within ongoing monitoring reports.

3.7 Legal and Democracy

The considerable work pressures in the Childrens Social Care area are continuing. The legal team will shortly see a lot more work generated as a result of the Accelerated Growth Fund, and arrangements are in place for the recruitment of a temporary solicitor to deal with the demand.

3.8 Catering - School Meals

In light of the fairly recent decision to cease the HBC School Meals service from 31 March 2025. Recruitment and retention is still a real concern. Staff turnover is at an all time high and motivating staff is becoming more difficult.

The school meals service will request from each school an expected catering transfer date to ensure we have resource capacity and avoid delays.

3.9 Stadium

Contractual Negotiations

- Everton FC (due to budget constraints – contract terminated)
- Widnes FC
- Halton Table Tennis
- DCBL Sponsorship

Atlas Security (Term Contractor)

The Stadium management team have raised a number of concerns over recent months. These have been highlighted directly with the Account Manager from Atlas as a risk and options are being considered regarding future arrangements.

Widnes Vikings

Overall attendances have reduced in the season 2023 up to the 30/09/23.

- Actual Attendance Average 1721
- Declared Attendance Average 2625

The impact of the low attendances for 2023 include.

- Reduced Income generation from secondary spend.
- Staging costs remain same unless contractual arrangements are reviewed to reflect the current levels of attendance. (Transformation programme)

3.10 Registration Services

The Registration Service is working with HBC ITC Service's, HBC Income and Stopford (an external Registration Management System provider) - to technically develop and allow online appointments for Births, Deaths, Marriage and Civil Partnerships. This use of automation in improving the customers journey is aligned with the "Reimagining Halton" transformation agenda. The Registration Service currently has a fulltime vacancy for a Senior Registration Officer, which is being advertised for a second time due to there being no suitable applicants so far.

3.11 Property Services (Operations)

Protect Duty

The 'Protect Duty', more commonly known as Martyn's Law is due to come in to force later in the year. The legislation will place a requirement on those responsible for certain publicly accessible buildings, locations and venues to consider the threat from terrorism and to implement appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures.

It will mainly focus on the requirement to undertake risk assessments of the various locations following which plans must be put in place in respect of implementing appropriate mitigation measures. The impact of this is that it may likely mean the introduction of measures such as public address voice alarm (PAVA) systems in certain venues where not already installed together with the enhancement of other factors such as street furniture, e.g. bollards, to prevent vehicular access to certain areas.

Accommodation review

With the new agile approach to working since the COVID pandemic, i.e. with office based staff only needing to be in the office for a minimum of 40% of the time, subject to service requirements, our main office accommodation is now significantly underutilised which gives us an opportunity to rationalise our office bases. Following on from a report produced in January 2023 in to our accommodation, a Member working group has been set up to look at the various options available to us in respect of rationalising our accommodation. Work is now being carried out looking at the feasibility of various options, once complete recommendations will be put forward to ensure the space is used more effectively in the future and to help generate revenue savings. Future updates will be given as this work progresses.

Carbon emission targets

Halton’s Climate Change Action Plan has set a target for the Council’s own carbon emissions to reach net zero by 2040 in line with the Liverpool City region. Two bids to the next round of the Public sector decarbonisation scheme will be submitted in early October, the first covering St Luke’s and St Pat’s care homes the second covering, Runcorn Town Hall, Kingsway Learning Centre and Picow Farm depot.

4.0 High Priority Equality Actions

- 4.1 Equality issues continue to form a routine element of the Council’s business planning and operational decision making processes. Additionally the Council must have evidence to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which came into force in April 2011.
- 4.2 The Councils latest annual progress report in relation to the achievement of its equality objectives is published on the Council website and is available via:

<http://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/Equality-and-Diversity.aspx>

5.0 Performance Overview

- 5.1 The following information provides a synopsis of progress for both milestones and performance indicators across the key business areas that have been identified by the Directorate.
- 5.2 It should be noted that given the significant and unrelenting downward financial pressures faced by the Council there is a requirement for Departments to make continuous in-year adjustments to the allocation of resources in order to ensure that the Council maintains a balanced budget.
- 5.3 Whilst every effort continues to be made to minimise any negative impact of such arrangements upon service delivery they may inevitably result in a delay in the delivery of some of the objectives and targets contained within this report.

Financial Management




Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Objective
FS 01	Set the Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Recommend Council Tax.


Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
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Report 2024-27 Medium Term Financial Strategy to Executive Board - November 2023.		On target to report the Medium Term Financial Strategy to Executive Board in November 2023. The financial forecast is being regularly updated.
Report 2024/25 revenue budget, capital programme and council tax to Council - March 2024.		Work has commenced with Management Team and the Transformation Board to develop efficiency targets for 2024/25 onwards. This is in addition to 2024/25 and 2025/26 savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Ref	Objective
FS 02	To effect financial prudence by assisting managers to control their budgets by monitoring spending and providing timely and accurate financial reports.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Provide monthly financial reports to budget holders within 8 days of month end.		Reports all issued on schedule to date.
Provide quarterly financial monitoring reports to Operational Directors for inclusion in Performance Monitoring Reports.		Quarter 1 reports are in the process of being finalised and will be shared with Operational Directors for inclusion in Performance Monitoring Reports.
Provide quarterly monitoring and forecasting reports on the overall budget to Executive Board.		Quarter 1 monitoring report on the overall budget will go to Executive Board on 16 November 2023.

Ref	Objective
FS 03	Provide for public accountability by reporting the Council's stewardship of public funds and its financial performance in the use of resources by preparing the statutory Statement of Accounts in accordance with the latest accounting standards.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Publish the Statement of Accounts following external audit and the Annual		The draft accounts were published and shared with the External Auditor

Governance Statement by 30th September 2023.	on 04 July 2023. The audit of accounts commenced at the start of October and expected to be finalised at the end of December. Audit Findings Report is expected to be reported to Audit & Governance Board in March 2024.
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Ref	Objective
FS 04	Make best use of cash resources available to the Council and meet its statutory responsibility by setting, implementing and monitoring the Treasury Management Policy.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Establish Treasury Management Policy and report to Council - March 2023.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Treasury Management Policy reported to Council on 08 March 2023
Provide monitoring reports to Executive Board on a bi-annual basis.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Treasury Management update to 30 September 2023 will be reported to Executive Board 16 November 2023.

Ref	Objective
FS 05	Ensure that the Capital Programme is affordable, prudent, and sustainable by setting and monitoring prudential borrowing indicators.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Establish and report prudential indicators to Council - March 2023.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Prudential indicators reported to Council on 08 March 2023.
Provide monitoring reports to the Executive Board on a bi-annual basis.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Position to 30 September 2023 will be reported to Executive Board 16 November 2023.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
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FS LI 01	Receive an unqualified external audit opinion on the accounts	Yes	Awaited			N/A	External audit expected to provide the audit opinion in November 2023.
FS LI 02	Receive an unqualified VFM opinion from the Council's External Auditor	Yes	Awaited			N/A	External audit not expected to provide VFM opinion until November 2023 at the earliest.
FS LI 03	Proportion of Council Tax that was due that was collected	94.14%	94.25%	53.9%			This is down by 0.52% on the same point last year
FS LI 04	The percentage of Business Rates which should have been received during the year that were received	96.18%	97.50%	56.4%			This is down 5.2% on the same point last year.
FS LI 05	Average time for processing new claims (Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction)	23.71	18	24.79			The Benefits Service is suffering unprecedented levels of staff sickness, in addition three members of staff have recently left. The Division is in the process of recruiting 3 Benefit Officers.
FS LI 06	Average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances	9.55	8	20.5			The Benefits Service is suffering unprecedented levels of staff sickness, in addition three members of staff have recently left. The Division is in the process of recruiting 3 Benefit Officers.
FSLI 07	Proportion of all supplier invoices paid within 30 days	91.13%	92.0%	91.32%			Invoice payment performance is up compared to 2022/23, although remains behind



	(including disputed invoices)						the target for the year. Performance during the rest of the year will be influenced by whether the team is fully resourced. At present it is carrying one vacancy and a recruitment process is about to commence.
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Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit



Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Objective
CXDU 01	To enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of corporate training opportunities through the design and implementation of appropriate learning interventions, to include the development of bespoke Learning & Development offerings to individual service areas.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Promote and take forward the delivery of actions identified within the Organisational Development Strategy September 2023	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The strategy has been reviewed, tailored accordingly, and is now aligned with the Transformation Programme requirements
Regular engagement with Management Team to identify areas of challenge and develop appropriate strategic responses June, September, December 2023, and March 2024.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This is scheduled periodically.
Embed knowledge and skills gained from Senior Leadership and Management Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This will be particularly targeted to supporting Transformation projects.

Programmes (MBA / MSc) December 2023.		
Reconfigure Leadership and Management development in the organisation to align with Transformation Programme principles December 2023.		Leadership & Management cohort established at Level 5, utilising the apprenticeship Levy to fund the qualification
Monitor the embedding of knowledge and skills gained through previously delivered in-house modular Leadership and Management development activity. Ongoing and report in December 2023.		Important to ensure return on investment and to inform future programmed support. However, due to reduction in resource it is unlikely to be achieved in 2023

Ref	Objective
CXDU 02	Implement the Apprenticeship Policy to support the establishment of apprenticeships across the Council, and optimise return on the Apprenticeship Levy.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Establish 20 new apprentice placements within Council services, utilising existing vacancies, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.		There is currently no specific resource in position to help to achieve this target. Rectification is planned by resource being placed in the Organisational Development Service, however a model of funding needs to be secured first to enable this. This is currently being examined. There are currently 6 new hire apprentices in the Council, with the last one recruited in March 2023. Other initiatives are currently being explored within the Transformation Programme.
Establish 20 new existing employee apprenticeships to enable up-skilling in		4 conversions this quarter, taking total up to 6 in this current financial year.

a range of business areas, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.		
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Ref	Objective
CXDU 03	Optimise the use of the Agency Worker contract across Council services, to secure ongoing reductions in the incidence and cost of agency usage, and to ensure that correct and appropriate resourcing solutions are being deployed across Council services.



Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Review and consider most appropriate resourcing mix in collaboration with service management in areas of highest agency usage (Transformation Programme) December 2023.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Currently a key strand of Transformation Programme and dedicated resource created in HR Operations. Refer to Emerging Issues above for more information.

Ref	Objective
CXDU 04	Work with high demand service areas to develop and implement effective recruitment programmes, optimising labour market engagement to attract high quality candidates.



Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Identify service areas with highest consistent recruitment demand, turnover, and low attraction rates. Develop tailored solutions. (Transformation Programme) December 2023.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Now a key strand of Transformation Programme. Detailed and specific campaigns running to meet requirements. Refer to Key Developments and Emerging Issues above for more information







Ref	Objective
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CXDU 05	Develop and implement an organisation wide change programme – The Future Work Programme - to evaluate and introduce revised working practices following to meet the requirements of the changing labour market and employee expectation in the post-pandemic environment (to include use of accommodation, HR policy and practice, wellbeing support, application of technology)
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Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Use findings of Corporate Accommodation Review (2023) to determine available workspace capacity and develop optimum balance of 'staff to space'. December 2023.		Corporate Accommodation Review in progress, overseen by Asset Management Working Group. This will be supported by Transformation Programme Resources that are currently being recruited the Accelerating Growth project.
Develop contractual model to meet business requirements of 'staff to space' balance. March 2024		Work for Q4 2023/24.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/ 23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXDU LI 01	Average FTE days lost to sickness	12.98 (Days)	9.5 (Days)	5.32 (Days)			Slightly better outturn than at Q2 of 2022/23 (5.96). Refer to narrative in Key Developments above around the implementation of HR Business Partnering to increase effectiveness in this area.




CXD U LI 02	Percentage of Employees without sickness	66.45	70.00	79.36			Higher than same period last year and better than outturn for whole of 2022/23. Also refer to comment against LI 01 above.
CXD U LI 03	Total Full Time Equivalent Staffing Establishment (Indicator for information only)	3,204	For information Only	3211	For information Only	For information Only	Reported for information purposes only.
CXD U LI 04	Total Staff (head count) (Indicator for information only)	4,127		4151			
CXD U LI 05	Total Agency Worker Usage (number of placements – year to date)	766	650	447			Outturn continues to be driven by high usage in Children's and Adults Services, resulting from labour market conditions, however usage across other areas to cover vacancies although reduced in comparison to last year is still more prevalent.
Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXD U LI 06	Total Agency Worker Cost (cumulative gross cost – year to date)	£8.34 m	£5.0m	4.69m			See LI 05 immediately above. <i>(Please note, the 22/23 actual has been updated to include 'off-contract' spend and has therefore</i>




							<i>increased from £8.5m previously reported)</i>
CXD U LI 10 9	The percentage of top 5% of earners that are: a) Women	61.45 %	55%	60.5%			Fluctuation exists in (a), (b) and (c), due to turnover. It should be noted that recruitment in to the top 5% of earners is not generally high volume, and as such scope for significant change over time is low.
	b) From BME communities	2.7%	2.0%	2.74%			
	c) With a disability	0%	8.0%	0%			
CXD U LI 10 10	No of staff declaring that they meet the definition of disability within the Equality Act 2010 as a % of the total workforce.	1.25%	10.00%	1.74%			Fluctuation exists due to turnover and the indicator outturn reflects self-declaration. The 10% target reflects the wider Halton community. Despite the mismatch, it is important that this continues to be monitored.
CXD U LI 11	Minority Ethnic community staff as % of total workforce.	0.99%	1.00%	1.39%			Shows improvement fluctuation exists due to turnover and outturn tends to hover around target level.
Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXD U LI 12	Average time to recruit (Applicant Tracking System reported figure)	19 Days	12.2 Days	14.1 Days			Outturn demonstrates the number of days taken from vacancy

							<p>closing date to completion of recruitment. Improvement in this outturn is reflective of changes to processes and remove of some checks for recruitments where they are not required, rather than operating a universal approach as has been the case historically.</p>
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Key Objectives / milestones



Ref	Objective
ICT 01	Constantly evaluate and improve the usability, resilience, control and flexibility of the Council’s Client interaction, Data Communications and Management, Hardware and Software provision.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Continued Enhancement and delivery of the E5, M365, Azure platforms to enhance and deliver new technologies into the authority - March 2024.		Significant progress continues to be made in the delivery stages of Office 365 and Azure Cloud services. Many user data sets have been migrated and will continue through Q2/3 when it is envisaged will be completed.
Delivery of the Front Door transformation programme delivering changes in process, customer contact and customer journey - March 2024.		As defined within the body of text, the project is now underway with considerable efforts being made to define and design both procedural and technical definitions and designs
The continued development of the Records Management Unit enhancing all opportunities and creating a		Ongoing development has included enhancing support for Information Management and prevention of data



central fulfilment centre within - March 2024.		loss, which includes enhancements that have been implemented in respect of hybrid mail.
Development of Interactive Services, through integration with the Contact Centre and One Stop Shop's - March 2024.		An evolving programme of work moving now at pace - development of the project documentation and objective set is now underway and will be reported against as the department evolves and changes with the delivery of the objectives in line with the transformation objectives for the department
Management and development of commercial ICT opportunity within desktop, hosting and DR provision - March 2024.		The continued development and delivery of the Finance solution into partners within the city region continues with additional services and deliveries continually sought
Continued compliance with Central Government and NCSC Security guidelines and compliance requirements – March 2024.		Actively monitored by DLUHC/NCSC and external audit – progress has been good through Q1, on target.


Ref	Objective
ICT 02	The implementation of a range of new corporate wide facilities including Web services, records & document management, business process workflow, corporate desktop portal, Information governance and Security Compliance process.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Delivery, deployment and Management of the E5, M365, Azure managed cloud platforms, enhancing user experience. - March 2024.		Ongoing preparatory work in the form of workshops with support staff provided by contracted support organisation. Most initial configuration of the Councils Microsoft Azure Tenant has been completed, currently working on the development of the end user experience, which is expected to be completed by the end of Q2. As within the body of text
Continued development and internal, commercial use of the Print Unit, Records management Unit - March 2024.		Ongoing development has included enhancing support for Information Management and prevention of data loss, which includes enhancements that have been implemented in



		respect of hybrid mail. The transfer of land search functions now complete and transfer of post, income and budget in process and delivery through the RMU is now underway.
Continued development of Contact Centre and One Stop Shop Services/Facilities/Integration with Authority wide process - March 2024 .development and internal, commercial use of the Print Unit, Records management Unit - March 2024 .		With the advent of the Front door/Customer Journey transformation programme, the department will evolve at pace and begin to report against developments over the coming months as the objectives are set.
The development of improved information governance and Security compliance in line with government guidelines - March 2024 .		This has been built into the configuration of the Councils Microsoft Tenancy and will continue to be enhanced and reported via the SIRO reports to Management Team. These changes will continue to evolve as the deployment of the new transformed ICT platform matures. This is part of a gradual change programme supported by the Councils ICT Security Programme to minimise disruption to users, while enhancing capabilities and improving the Councils security and compliance position.





Ref	Objective
ICT 03	The implementation of a range of new corporate wide facilities including cloud and web service solutions, records & document management enhancement, business process development, customer service provision.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
The delivery of the Front Door transformation programmes across Admin and Support Services - March 2023 .		The disaggregation of the Administrative Support Division is now underway as part of the transformation programme greater detail within the body of this report.
The delivery of new and enhanced IT Security Management and Compliance systems/facilities across		Most preparatory work has been completed. The onboarding of a Security Operations Centre will be the priority for Q2 and Q3

the authority's user base - March 2024.		
The delivery of new and enhanced technology provision across the authority's user base - March 2024.		Users have already been migrated for their email and calendar facilities. These will now be further enhanced to ensure improved data loss prevention and security of the council's information assets with the recently introduced MFA and background security measures.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
ICT LI 01	Average availability of the Council's M365 Systems (%).	N/A	99.9%	TBA	TBA	TBA	This new KPI relates to the new M365 platform currently under development - availability stats are unavailable at this stage but as the deployment progresses this stat will become valid
ICT LI 02	Security Incidents across quarter	N/A	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	In line with the delivery of the new M365 platform this statistic will be monitored by new systems currently under development – Again to evolve with the programme of work.
ICT LI 03	Service Desk Call Resolution	86.56%	90%	90%			The Service Desk continues to be challenging with a reduced staffing due to vacancy and sickness however there are plans (integrated with the Customer Journey project and M365 delivery) to automate 'self-help' process

ICT LI 04	Average working days from delivery to completion of a new Laptop.	1 (Days)	1 (Days)	TBA	TBA	TBA	Again, a new KPI that will evolve with the considerable programme of work underway. With the advent of the new Dell Laptop contract completed mid-June, this new stat will evolve with the M365 role out plan.
ICT LI 05	Number of resolved customer contacts – Contact Centre	27500	27000				The level of calls into the contact centre continues to rise, with seasonal and service dependant increases as the financial strain upon residents increases. Along with the increase in services offered by the team.
ICT LI	Number of resolved contacts – One Stop Shop's	15500	15500				The level of foot fall into the Shops continues to rise, with seasonal and service dependant increases as the financial strain upon residents increases.

[Legal & Democracy](#)



Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Objective
LD 01	To ensure that decision makers are supported through the provision of timely and accurate advice and information and are kept informed of changing legislation and responsibilities.





Milestone	Progress s Q2	Supporting Commentary
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Review constitution - May 2023.		The revised Constitution was approved at Annual Council
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Ref	Objective
LD 02	To provide efficient and effective Democratic Support Services that provides Elected Members, as key decision makers, with the necessary information, support and training opportunities to fulfil their individual potential and management and governance role effectively.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
To ensure that all members have been given the opportunity of a having a MAP meeting where desired.		All Members have been offered a MAP meeting.
To induct all new members by October 2023.		The new Members have been inducted.



Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
LD LI 01	No. Of Members with Personal Development Plans (54 Total).	54	54	54			All Members have been offered a MAP. Take up is a matter of personal choice.
LD LI 02	Percentage of Members attending at least one organised	52 98%	54 100%	30 55.6%			Reasonable progress has been made, but as always attendance is a


	Training Event.						matter of personal choice for Members.
LD LI 03	Average Time taken to issue prosecutions from receipt of full instructions (working days).	10 (Days)	10 (Days)	10 (Days)			In two cases, there was a delay in reviewing files due to pressures of other work. The client department was kept aware and prosecutions were issued in a timely manner after receipt of full instructions.
LD LI 04	Average time taken to file application for Care proceedings at Court from receipt of all written evidence from client department (working days).	3 (Days)	3 (Days)	3 (Days)			The target has been met.
LD LI 05	% of Executive Board minutes published within 5 working days after the meeting.	100%	100%	100%			The target has been met.

Key Objectives / milestones















CE 05	To routinely use customer feedback to drive forward service improvement in the Registration Service
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Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Ensure our services are available to those who wish to or who need to use them by providing accessible information in a range of ways (e.g. written information, online services).		Monitoring and reviewing our lessons learned based on customer feedback, comments and complaints
Seek the views of the local community and make adjustments to our service delivery when appropriate, based on customer feedback, to improve the service going forward. Where feedback cannot be acted upon, an explanation will be given.		You Said... We Did..... outcomes are published

Ref	Objective
CE 06	Develop a Stadium Business Plan and Marketing Strategy to make the Stadium more commercially viable.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Business Plan & Marketing Strategy		This will be heavily focused around the Transformation recommendations. Once Management have received these they will plan accordingly and produce/develop KPIs that are relevant.

Key Performance Indicators





Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CE LI 10	Registration Service - Births - 98% registered within 42 days	100%	100%	100%			Figures in line with expectation.
CE LI 11	Registration Service - Deaths with MCCDs (no coronial involvement) - 90% registered within 5 days	87%*	100%	98.39%			Where the service has not met the required 90% KPI, this is due to GPs signing death certificates on day 4 or later. 99.40% customers seen early 9or on time within 10 minutes of appointment time.
CE LI 12	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Primary Schools.		75%	73.1%			This figure will be revised after October Census to get a more accurate number of pupils on FSM.
CE LI 13	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Secondary Schools.		60%	65.6%			This figure will be revised after October Census to get a more accurate number of pupils on FSM.
CE LI 14	Take up of school lunches (%) – primary schools.		60%	54.6%			This figure will be revised after October Census to get a more accurate number of pupils on roll.
CE LI 15	Take up of school lunches (%) – secondary schools.		50%	52.31%			This figure will be revised after October Census to get a more accurate number of pupils on roll.
CE LI 16	Room Occupancy –	12.34%	40%	31.8%			New KPI for monitoring occupancy rates. Note the summer




	Meetings (Box Level)						months is historically down in line with school holidays. This rate is expected to rise from September.
CE LI 17	Room Occupancy – Conferences (Bridge & Karalius)	50.19%	60%	53.9%		 	New KPI for monitoring occupancy rates. Note the summer months is historically down in line with school holidays. This rate is expected to rise from September.

Property Services


Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Objective
EEP 07	Corporate Resources: To provide an effective corporate property service



Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Ensure the leisure centre is on track on 31st March 2024 both in terms of time and cost by project managing it throughout the year.		Leisure Centre is currently on track in terms of time and budgets
Ensure the contractor commences on site with the major upgrade works at both St Patrick's and St Luke's by 1st Sept 2023 .		Works at both St Patricks and St Luke's have been delayed as a result of the decarbonisation bids that are to be submitted in October. Once the outcome of same is know the projects will be able to progress
Ensure all the projects are progressed in line with the school maintenance programme and are delivered by 31st March 2024 .		The majority of projects are now complete with only 3 outstanding all of which are due to be completed on site and final accounts finalised by 31 st March 2024
Ensure all the projects are progressed in line with the corporate maintenance		All projects for corporate buildings are progressing, and the budget will

programme and are delivered by 31st March 2024.		be fully expended by 31 st March 2024
Submit a decarbonisation funding bid in conjunction with the Combined Authority by October 2023 and be successful in having the funding approved by 31 st March 2024.		Funding bid on track for submission by October 10 th 2023. There will be 2 separate bids, one covering the care homes and the other covering, Runcorn Town Hall, Kingsway Learning Centre and Picow Farm Depot.
Ensure there is a wide and varied mix of commodities and services on offer in the Market and ensure occupancy levels are maintained or increased by 31st March 2024.		There is a good and varied mix of commodities available at Widnes Market, various events took place over the summer to help increase the footfall.
Ensure all necessary servicing, and repairs and maintenance is carried out within our properties by 31st March 2024 and ensure building managers are satisfied with the service provided.		All servicing, repairs and maintenance at corporate properties is ongoing. All servicing for 23/24 will be completed by 31 st March 2024. Building managers are periodically provided with questionnaires to ensure they are happy with service provided.




Ref	Objective
EEP 09	Corporate Priority: To design, manage and improve processes to generate increasing value for customers and other stakeholders. To undertake Employee Reviews for all staff

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
All EDRs to be completed by September 23		All departmental EDRs completed

Ref	Objective
EEP 10	Corporate Priority: To design, manage and deliver a place-based business support programme for Halton Commission support sessions to provide advice and guidance based on initial diagnostic.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Scheme in Place September 2023		Scheme fully designed with commissioning commenced and now called the Business Support Service
Scheme finalised March 2025		On track for March 2025 completion

Ref	Objective
EEP 11	Corporate Priority: Secure funding, support procurement and ground-breaking to take place for Ultraviolet at Sci Tech Daresbury Commissioning of Ultraviolet

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Funding Secured Q3 2023 / 2024		The Joint Venture have agreed terms with The Chrysalis Fund and discussions are ongoing with the CA to secure Investment Zone funding.
Procurement Q4 2023 / 2024		The project is being tendered using the Procure Partnerships Framework. Initial phase was completed this quarter and the tender will be put to market in Q3.
Groundbreaking Q1 2024 2025		Currently on target for a start on site in April 2024.

Key Performance Indicators

OPERATIONAL ISSUES	BASELINE POSITION	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 1	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 3	INTERVENTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Climate change agenda and carbon emissions	CO2 emissions for 2021/22 amount to 9327 tonnes	Reduce emissions by 1%	Reduce emissions by 5%	<p>Submit a funding bid and obtain funding to carry out decarbonisation works to various buildings.</p> <p>Continue to deliver the LED lighting replacement programme.</p> <p>Carry out further rationalisation of our property portfolio to reduce emissions.</p> <p>Help carry out education programme for officers and Members alike</p>
Level of satisfaction with repair & maintenance service delivered via the FM team	75% of surveys returned were rated as either good or excellent	80% Of surveys returned rated as either good or excellent	85% Of surveys returned rated as either good or excellent	<p>Issue questionnaires to building managers in order to rate the level of service provided.</p> <p>Continue to deliver a repairs and maintenance service in a timely manner, with quality contractors.</p> <p>Continue with the procurement of contractors, when necessary, based on best value principles.</p>

7.0 Financial Statements

Finance Department

Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2023

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	6,453	3,030	3,011	19	48
Insurances	910	800	921	(121)	(184)
Supplies & Services	364	250	296	(46)	(94)
Rent Allowances	35,500	14,686	14,686	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,748	600	569	31	68
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	23	23	0	0
Discretionary Social Fund	310	10	5	5	7
Discretionary Housing Payments	300	108	108	0	0
Household Support Fund Expenditure	654	653	653	0	0
Energy Bills Support	41	41	41	0	0
LCR Levy	2,241	1,121	1,121	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	17	0	0	0	17
Bad Debt Provision	77	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	48,685	21,322	21,434	(112)	(138)
Income					
Other Fees & Charges	-344	-195	-188	(7)	(10)
Burdens Grant	-60	-60	-88	28	28
Dedicated schools Grant	-123	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Liability Order	-541	-474	-475	1	3
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	0
Schools SLAs	-295	-295	-301	6	6
LCR Reimbursement	-2,241	-1,121	-1,121	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-400	-67	-67	0	0
Rent Allowances	-34,800	-13,865	-13,623	(242)	(363)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-35	-49	14	25
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-300	-93	-93	0	0
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-515	-268	-276	8	17
Universal Credits	-5	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Admin Grant	-204	0	0	0	0
Household Support Fund Grant	-654	-52	-52	0	0
Energy Bills Support	-245	-245	-245	0	0
Alternative Fuel	-57	-57	-57	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-121	121	184
Reimbursements & Other Grants	-159	-110	-110	0	0
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-82	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-41,252	-16,937	-16,866	(71)	(110)
Net Operational Expenditure	7,433	4,385	4,568	(183)	(248)
Recharges					
Premises Support	268	134	134	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,069	1,034	1,034	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,330	-2,665	-2,665	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,993	-1,497	-1,497	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	4,440	2,888	3,071	(183)	(248)

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of September 2023 the department is reporting a forecasted overspend of £0.183m, it is expected net spend for the year will be over the approved budget by £0.248m

Staffing forecasts for the year include an estimated amount for the 2023/24 pay award which will be higher than the 4% increase included in the 2023/24 budget.

Despite this it is expected staffing costs to be lower than budget due to vacancies and some spend being reallocated against external grant where possible.

Rent allowances continue to be an area of concern. Increased demand for supported accommodation results in increased costs for the Council over and above the housing benefit grant received. This should ideally net to zero, however Government will only support up to a nominal

figure after which, 60% will come from housing benefits and the remaining 40% is up to the Council to support. The impact of this can be seen from the £0.363m forecasted overspend by the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

The insurance budget is also under significant pressure, new contracts are out for tender and there has been an increase in costs across all policy premiums, resulting in an estimated overspend of £0.184m in the current financial year. The additional cost of this will be funded from the insurance reserve.

The most notable area of underspend against budget is concessionary travel, where net spend will be approximately £0.068m lower than budget at financial year-end., down from the forecast in quarter 1. Concessionary travel has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic as overall usage levels are still lower than pre covid levels. It is envisaged that support for operators to ensure sustainability of bus routes will drop towards the end of the year which may increase the overall outturn position, this will be reviewed at further points later in the year.







Approved 2023/24 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

**FINANCE DEPARTMENT
APPENDIX A**

Progress Against Agreed Savings

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
F1	Client Finance	109	Increase by £3 per week the charge to clients for the Appointeeships Service to ensure full cost recovery.	45	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Implemented in April 2023 and income budget increased accordingly
F6	Income Control	118	Removal of payment kiosks which are now significantly under-utilised and in need of replacement. The ceasing of annual rental and licence costs will provide a saving. Residents can instead make payments for council tax etc. via the numerous Paypoint outlets across the Borough.	20	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Implemented April 2023 and expenditure budgets reduced accordingly
F8	Insurance	1,043	Reduction in the insurance budgets, following a review of claims history over recent years with advice from the Council's insurance broker. The majority of claims are provided for via self-insurance, with external	135	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Implemented April 2023 and expenditure budgets reduced accordingly

			policies providing cover for exceptional or potentially high cost claims.					
F9	Internal Audit	300	Restructure in light of potential retirements over the next two years within the Internal Audit Team.	0	0	50		Planned restructure to take place during 2024/25 and to be implemented 1 April 2025
F11	Purchase to Pay	27	Increase in the target income budgets for the Early Payment Scheme (£15k) and the Corporate Card Programme rebate (£15k)	30	0	0		Implemented 2023/24 income budgets increased accordingly
F12	Benefits Processing & Administration	216	Deletion of a 1.0fte vacant Housing Benefit Officer Post and a 0.5fte vacant Visiting Officer Post.	55	0	0		These two vacant posts accepted for a saving in 2023/24 and can be deleted from the structure.
F13	Discretionary Support Scheme	221	Review the roles, procedures and structure of the team.	0	25	0		A review of the DSS structure will be undertaken in 2024/25.
F15	Business Rates	-26	Increase the charge to Halton Chamber of Commerce for providing billing and collection of Business Improvement District (BID) income.	2	0	0		2023/24 operating agreement between the Council and Halton Chamber of Commerce still to be agreed.
F16	Concessionary Travel	1,892	Due to a decrease in passenger numbers	150	0	0		On Target

			<p>following Covid, it is considered that the budget for concessionary travel costs can be reduced. The budget was underspent by £421k (20%) in 2021/22. A reduction in this budget will not prevent any eligible concessionary passenger from still being able to travel.</p>					
F17	Council Tax	84	<p>Increase the charges applied when a court summons is issued by 30% (£23), to achieve full cost recovery over the three year period.</p>	40	40	40	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>On target, summons cost increased for 2023/24</p>
F17 Cont	Council Tax	N/A	<p>Establish a new post dedicated to reviewing council tax exemptions. It is considered at least a 3% reduction in Single Person Discount awards could be achieved, generating approximately £150k of additional council tax income, less</p>	116	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Post appointed to and review of exemptions to commence over the next quarter.</p>

			the cost of the new post.					
F18	Financial Management - Treasury Management	1,152	Closer management of medium- to long-term cash balances will give greater opportunity to invest in higher interest bearing accounts due to increasing interest rates.	300	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Interest payable on target to achieve increased target.
Total Finance Department				893	65	90		

Chief Executive's Delivery Unit**Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2023**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	2,795	1,297	1,196	101	53
Employees Training	117	58	44	14	5
Apprenticeship Levy	300	150	162	(12)	(50)
Supplies & Services	303	100	47	53	81
Total Expenditure	3,515	1,605	1,449	156	89
Income					
Fees & Charges	-211	-120	-104	(16)	(31)
Schools SLA	-533	-533	-532	(1)	(1)
Total Income	-744	-653	-636	(17)	(32)
Net Operational Expenditure	2,771	952	813	139	57
Recharges					
Premises Support	117	59	59	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,023	512	512	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,491	-2,746	-2,746	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,298	-2,175	-2,175	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-1,527	-1,223	-1,362	139	57

Comments on the above figures

With the formal introduction of the Transformation Programme, the Chief Executive's Delivery Unit (previously Policy, People, Performance & Efficiency) is undergoing a period of change. In Q1 the net spend outturn performance was forecast at £0.042m under budget, there has been a marginal increase to this forecast as the forecast outturn is now estimating net spend to be £0.057 below the approved budget.

Despite employee spend being £0.101m below budget due to vacancies, there are restructures in place to change the current model, which will help identify and tackle the issues the Council is facing with rising agency costs. The apprenticeship levy overspend against budget has been reduced to reflect the spend across the initial 6 months of the financial year.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Capital Projects as at 30 June 2023

	Annual Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Expenditure				
Transformation Programme	5,000	2,500	998	4,002
Total Capital	5,000	2,500	998	4,246

Comments on the above figures

The Transformation Programme has begun within the Council, a number of staff are now in post and consultancy work has begun. Moving further into 23/24 it is expected these costs will increase as more staff are introduced into the programme work on programme themes gathers pace.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DELIVERY UNIT

APPENDIX A

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
PPPE 1	Apprenticeships	198	Reduce the budget which provides for apprenticeship salaries by 50%. More apprenticeships will therefore be attached to vacant posts which are already budgeted for. This may particularly help to fill vacancies in areas where recruitment is difficult.	99	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Reflected within the 2022/23 budget.
PPPE 4	Organisational Development & Performance	383	Explore whether Organisational Development / Learning and Development activities could be rationalised and restructured to reduce cost, given there is currently a vacant post within the team.	65	0	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	Restructures to the team are currently being considered to help develop and change the way Organisational Development/Learning is carried out.
Total PPPE Department				164	0	0		

ICT and Administration Department**Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2023**

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employee Expenditure	8,126	3,800	3,965	(165)	(320)
Supplies & Services Expenditure	1,012	660	675	(15)	(29)
Capital Finance	78	25	12	13	27
Computer Repairs & Software	1,333	1,050	1,124	(74)	(85)
Communication Costs	13	6	38	(32)	(41)
Premises Expenditure	175	119	116	3	9
Transport Expenditure	3	1	1	0	1
Total Expenditure	10,740	5,661	5,931	(270)	(438)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-996	-50	-85	35	168
Schools SLA Income	-610	-600	-605	5	10
Total Income	-1,606	-650	-690	40	178
Net Operational Expenditure	9,134	5,011	5,241	(230)	(260)
Recharges					
Premises Support	557	279	279	0	0
Transport	16	8	8	0	0
Central Support	1,797	899	899	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-10,951	-5,477	-5,477	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-7,087	-4,291	-4,291	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,047	720	950	(230)	(260)

Comments on the above figures

At the end of September 2023 the department is expected to exceed the annual approved budget by £0.260m. A marginally increased forecasted overspend from the original position in Q1 (£0.199m). This is due to additional security costs over a 3 year period moving from the capital fund into the revenue stream.

Employee costs for the year are expected to exceed the budget position by approximately £0.320m. This is based on increased employee costs from the proposed 2023/24 pay deal plus staff turnover saving targets not currently being achieved. In the 2024/25 financial year the Administration Staff will be disaggregated, and their respective budgets will move to the service areas, however for the current financial year, the budgets will remain in the ICT and Administration Department for reporting purposes.

The over achievement of income against Fees and Charges relates to external client income for traded services. This is for Agresso implementation and support at partner sites. There is also marginally higher MFD usage within schools which has offset lower than budgeted SLA uptake, with the shift to academies and increased fees this is likely to continue to worsen. With a number of agency staff across the Council, the department is continuing to recharge licence costs for non HBC staff to their respective departments, this should help budget holders more readily see the impact agency staff are having on Council's finances as there is not just the direct fees to be considered, there is strain on a number of other services and existing contracts which do come at additional costs.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Capital Projects as at 30 September 2023

	Annual Capital Allocation	Allocation to Date	Actual Spend	Total Allocation Remaining
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure				
ICT Rolling Capital Project	700	350	184	516
Total Capital	700	350	184	651

Comments on the above figures

The ICT and Admin Department has a rolling budget of £0.700m for capital needs each year. The capital allocation will be reduced by £0.218m to fund a new laptop contract with Dell. The new hardware will be able to function without the use of VDI, meaning all Council staff utilising laptops should see an increase in performance allowing them to carry out their work more efficiently. In recent years there has been a shift into user-based subscription costs for Microsoft Office and other software licences, meaning that the IT department in future years will be less reliant on the capital allocation and there will be a significant strain on the revenue funds.

ICT AND SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
ICT3	External Clients	N/A	Recharge the Youth Offending Services for the full cost of ICT services which are hosted by Halton, but have not thus far been recharged. This approach has been agreed by the Cheshire and Warrington partner councils.	232	0	0	U	Final figure still to be agreed with partner councils.
Total ICT and Admin Department				232	0	0		

Legal and Democratic Services Department**Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2023**

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	1,436	755	703	52	76
Agency Costs (Locums)	0	0	375	(375)	(575)
Supplies & Services	164	130	131	(1)	(5)
Civic Catering & Functions	26	13	2	11	3
Legal Expenses	218	100	166	(66)	(207)
Transport Related Expenditure	11	6	0	6	3
Total Expenditure	1,855	1,004	1,377	(373)	(705)
Income					
School SLA's	-92	-92	-78	(14)	(14)
Licence Income	-284	-142	-121	(21)	12
Reimbursement & Other Grants	0	0	0	0	25
Fees & Charges Income	-70	-34	-33	(1)	(1)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-393	393	593
Total Income	-446	-268	-625	357	615
Net Operational Expenditure	1,409	736	752	(16)	(90)
Recharges					
Premises Support	58	29	29	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	282	141	141	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	340	170	170	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,749	906	922	(16)	(90)

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of September 2023 the department is reporting a small net overspend against budget. It is currently forecast that net spend for the department will be over the approved budget by approximately £0.090m at the end of the financial year. This is slightly improved position from the end of Q1 where the forecasted net spend outturn was £0.099m over budget.

Employee costs for the year are still expected to marginally be below the approved budget. This is a result of the number of vacancies that exist within the department but mitigated by agency costs.

The main area of concern for the department is the volume of agency costs resulting from hard to fill vacant posts. It is expected these costs will be in the region of £0.575m at the end of the financial year. This figure has increased due to additional staffing resources required for Children's Care Orders and clearing a backlog of cases. Whilst it has been agreed that these costs will be funded from reserves it is important that the Council takes action to begin to reduce reliance on agency usage.

Within the forecast £0.207m overspend against budget of legal expenses, there is an estimated £0.233m costs relating to the contracting of barristers, most of which again, are due to the limited number of staff available to clear an increasing caseload. The impact of the transformation and recovery work in Children Services, along with increased support from the recruitment team and graduate rolls, should help alleviate the pressure seen in this area. However, the impact will likely not be seen immediately.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT**APPENDIX A**

Ref	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
L4	Marketing, Design and Communications	45	Review the frequency of production of Inside Halton, as part of the wider consideration of the Council's communications strategy required for the Transformation Programme	0	15	0	U	The marketing and communications team has now moved within the Chief executives Delivery Unit so that they can review the frequency of production.
L5	Mayoral Services	102	Review the various budgets comprising the Mayoral function, with a target to achieve a 20% savings across these.	20	0	0	U	Looking at alternative ways to run the events and bring operations in line with other local authorities who have more independent/self-funded events. The savings should be on track to be met by the end of the year.
Total Legal Services Department				20	15	0		

Community and GreenspaceRevenue Budget as at 30 September 2023

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,085	7,607	7,428	179	358
Premises	3,685	1,483	1,479	4	8
Supplies & Services	1,598	837	882	(45)	(90)
Hired & Contracted Services	607	231	286	(55)	(111)
Book Fund	140	86	86	0	0
Food Provisions	371	117	181	(64)	(127)
School Meals Food	1,965	841	858	(17)	(32)
Miscellaneous Transport Costs	117	55	68	(13)	(26)
Other Agency Costs	601	182	209	(27)	(53)
Other Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Waste Disposal Contracts	6,885	106	57	49	98
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	67	18	14	4	8
Grant to Norton Priory	172	86	87	(1)	(1)
Capital Financing	201	41	0	41	83
Total Expenditure	33,494	11,690	11,635	55	115
Income					
Sales Income	-3,962	-1,950	-1,402	(548)	(1,095)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,752	-3,488	-3,614	126	251
Rental Income	-221	-98	-108	10	19
Government Grant Income	-695	-646	-774	128	256
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-665	-383	-389	6	12
SLA Income	-2,391	-2,260	-2,139	(121)	(242)
Internal Fees Income	-592	-96	-176	80	161
Capital Salaries	-173	-46	-46	0	0
Transfers From Reserves	0	51	51	0	0
Total Income	-14,451	-8,916	-8,597	(319)	(638)
Net Operational Expenditure	19,043	2,774	3,038	(264)	(523)
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,825	913	913	0	0
Transport	2,046	1,027	1,047	(20)	(41)
Central Support	3,856	1,933	1,933	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-540	-274	-274	0	0
Net Total Recharges	7,386	3,599	3,619	(20)	(41)
Net Departmental Expenditure	26,429	6,373	6,657	(284)	(564)

Comments on the above figuresFinancial Position

The net department spend is £0.284m over budget at the end of Quarter 2 and the estimated outturn overspend against budget for 2023/24 is £0.564m.

Net employee spend is estimated to be under the approved budget at the end of the financial year. The forecast outturn includes the pay increase proposal of £1,925 for all grades (a 3.5% increase for DM and above scales has already been agreed). Whilst the proposed pay deal is over what had been included within the budget this is mitigated by the number of vacancies within leisure services and reduced casual usage in line with 2022/23 actual data.

Food Provisions is overspent due to the increasing inflationary food costs from suppliers.

Whilst it is currently forecast that waste disposal spend will be within the approved budget for the year this comes with a certain amount of caution. Waste disposal forecast cost is based on estimated tonnage of waste and the department is still waiting on invoices to be presented for previous years.

Sales income for the year is expected to underachieve compared to the budgeted income target. Shortfalls in income at the Stadium, school meal sales plus a reduction in room hire at Community Centres and Libraries are forecast to contribute towards lower income levels.

Additional grant Income has been received from Sport England under the Swimming Pool Support Fund initiative to ensure the continued provision of leisure centres in the Borough.

School Meals SLA income is forecast to underachieve over the course of the year, but this will be mitigated by reduced staffing costs.

Trade Waste fee charges are expected to overachieve with the increased uptake of green waste collections.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Capital Projects as at 30 September 2023

Project Title	2023/24 Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Stadium Minor Works	34	17	18	16
Brookvale Pitch Refurbishment	28	14	13	15
Halton Leisure Centre	15,056	7,528	8,014	7,042
Open Spaces Schemes	851	426	137	714
Children's Playground Equipment	105	53	15	90
Upton Improvements	13	0	0	13
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12	2	1	11
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340	30	0	340
Runcorn Town Park	284	142	106	178
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,023	512	20	1,003
Pickerings Pasture Café	520	250	0	520
Litter Bins	20	5	0	20
Totals	18,286	8,978	8,324	9,962

Comments on the above figures**Halton (Moor Lane) Leisure Centre**

The project is making good progress and on track. Total project cost has increased slightly due to increase in provisional sum items. Totals costings for the project are continually being reviewed.

Open Spaces

This covers spending on a variety of externally funded projects: Birchfield Gardens refurbishment, Upton Rocks access works, The Big Halton Forest, and some small minor works contracts. Spending is behind target due to capacity issues.

Children's Playground Equipment

This is an ongoing project which includes spend on improvements within the Borough's playgrounds.

Upton Improvements

Open space improvement works undertaken. Work has been delayed due to capacity issues.

Crow Wood Park

The main contract is now completed, outstanding balance will cover final and retention payments.

Landfill Tax Credits Schemes

Currently used to support improvements for a rolling programme of existing playgrounds/open space schemes across the Borough.

Runcorn Town Park

Project to renew park infrastructure. Project is ongoing with 2 contracts on site. Carry forward to complete work in season and for contingency payments. INEOS funding of £300k was deferred - £10k each to 2023/24 & 2024/25 plus £280k to 2025/26.

Wigg/Spike Island Recovery Works





The programme was slightly behind due to staff capacity issues. However, a consultancy is in place and have begun site investigation works ahead of finalising designs/contract documentation for tender.

Pickerings Pasture Café

Creation of Café Facility at Pickerings Pasture, a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), which would be operated as a franchise. The Council has been asked to include £520k within the Council's Capital Programme to fund the construction of the café facility. Funded over seven years, the capital financing cost would be £87,500 per annum. This sum could be realised through a bid to the Environment Fund (paying £87,500 pa for seven years). 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.

COMMUNITY & GREENSPACE DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
COMM 1	The Brindley Theatre	64	Reduce Box Office opening hours from 10am-5pm Monday-Friday to 10am-2pm. Currently 80% of tickets are purchased online or by telephone and this is increasing each year. Replace all non-LED lighting in the building. This is estimated to reduce on-stage energy costs by 75%.	10 10	0 0	0 0		Box Office core opening hours were reduced to 5 hours (Mon – Fri) 10am – 3pm. They will be realigned to 4 hours daily 11am – 3.00pm (Mon – Fri) from 1 September onwards. No LED lighting has yet been installed but is planned for later in the financial year.
COMM 3	Sport & Recreation	471	Restructuring the roles and responsibilities of the Sports Development Team	0	36	0		On track to meet savings identified for 2024/25.
COMM 4	Stadium & Catering Services	751	Franchise the concourse only catering services to an external operator. An organisational restructure is currently being implemented for Stadium & Catering Services to reflect recent service changes.	50 40	0 0	0 0		
COMM 6	Area Forums	170	Reduce the base budget provision to £50k temporarily for one year, with all unspent monies in 2022/23 (currently £120k) being carried forward to be spent by the relevant Area Forums in 2023/24. The base budget position will then be reviewed for 2024/25.	120	-120	0		Implemented in 2023/24 budget setting.
COMM 5	Stadium & Catering Services – School Meals	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over £200,000 for a number of years and is forecast to make a similar loss by year-end. Work would be undertaken with schools over the next two years to support	0	0	12		Work underway in school meals being delivered through alternative means

Ref.	Service	Net	Description of Savings	Savings Value			Current	Comments
			them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.					
Total Community & Environment Department				230	-84	12		

Revenue Operational Budget at 30 September 2023

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,311	2,666	2,633	33	65
Repairs & Maintenance	1,940	983	990	(7)	(11)
Premises	122	110	116	(6)	(10)
Energy & Water Costs	1,768	680	570	110	207
NNDR	793	684	645	39	39
Rents	170	127	128	(1)	(1)
Economic Regeneration Activities	37	3	3	0	0
Security	509	187	202	(15)	(30)
Supplies & Services	356	183	190	(7)	(14)
Supplies & Services - Grant	962	262	262	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	105	53	53	0	0
Capital Finance	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	38	38	38	0	0
Total Expenditure	12,111	5,976	5,830	146	245
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-840	-409	-449	40	81
Rent - Commercial Properties	-906	-356	-334	(22)	(43)
Rent - Investment Properties	-44	-22	-20	(2)	(5)
Rent - Markets	-852	-429	-406	(23)	(46)
Government Grant	-1,229	-318	-318	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-990	-413	-416	3	6
Schools SLA Income	-300	-284	-235	(49)	(49)
Recharges to Capital	-251	-63	-70	7	14
Transfer from Reserves	0	-732	-732	0	1
Total Income	-5,412	-3,026	-2,980	(46)	(41)
Net Operational Expenditure	6,699	2,950	2,850	100	204
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,006	1,003	1,003	0	0
Transport	23	12	12	0	0
Central Support	1,710	856	856	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-7,728	-3,864	-3,864	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,985	-1,993	-1,993	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,714	957	857	100	204

Comments on the above figures

Budget monitoring is undertaken on a monthly basis with budget holders to ensure that unapproved overspends are avoided, developing action plans to achieve efficiencies and address areas of budget pressure.

Finance works closely with the department to manage and analyse underspending to identify potential savings that could help meet current and future years' priorities.

Comparison to Previous Quarter

Economy, Enterprise & Property outturn has improved from a forecasted outturn of £0.125m over budget to £0.204m under budget at the end of the financial year with a current figure of net spend being £0.100m under budget for the second quarter of the year. A positive variance of £0.329m.

Supporting Information

The Department consists of 154fte of which 66fte are core funded, with a staff turnover savings target of £0.134m. There has continued to be delays in recruiting across the department, and so the projection is currently that the department will be under budget by £0.065m at financial year-end.

By carefully monitoring the accounts, the department has utilised grant/external funding where possible to try and relieve the pressure on the core Council budget. This is reflected in employee expenses this quarter where various projects have been identified and staff time has been charged accordingly. This process will continue throughout the year. As in Quarter 1 it is important to note that forecasts include an allowance for the 2023/24 pay award.

As inflation is running much higher than originally predicted at the time of budget setting, the department will be expected to absorb any price increases that may arise from within the budget allocations made. This is proving difficult for repairs and maintenance due to the continued increase in the price of materials. The Repairs and Maintenance programme is constantly under review to keep within budget.

However, there is a risk that unexpected events may occur which require expenditure to be incurred, that has not been allocated for.

The Asset Management Service has incurred one off expense this year, due to the vacant unit at The Hive, that was previously occupied by Frankie & Benny's. Costs relating to NNDR, Repairs and Maintenance and Service Charges have had to be paid by HBC until the unit is leased.

Due to the energy costs budget increasing significantly in 2023/24, the department is forecasting that it will be £0.207m under budget in year as costs have not risen as much as expected, but costs are still predicted to be £0.502m higher than 2022/23, which is an increase of over 50%. The forecast will change over the following two quarters depending on the change in energy usage over this time.

This financial year has witnessed an increase in the security costs. This is due not only to inflation, but the need for additional security in Halton Lea, due to anti-social behaviour. The need for security at all locations is reviewed on a regular basis and if necessary, advice is provided from the Police.

As in previous years, and the long recovery from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the financial challenges of commercial property rent continue to present a significant financial challenge, though the second quarter of the year has seen an increase in the amount of commercial property income. This is due to Agency Staff within Asset Management being able to focus predominantly on the rent reviews and licence fees.

There is also a focus within the team to fill the vacant properties within the portfolio. The current projection is that the income target will not be achieved by £0.046m. This is a £0.144 lower than the figure projected in Quarter 1.

Due to adverse trading conditions in the retail sector which have been made worse due to inflation and increased utilities costs, the department is projecting to under achieve on market rental income targets this budget year. The occupancy rate is approximately 89%.

The School Cleaning Service Level Agreement (SLA) is not covering its costs this budget year due to the need to employ agency staff to cover sickness and leave and the pay award. A review of SLA charges has been undertaken ahead of the next budget year. The demand for the service is also decreasing as schools move to Academies.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Capital Projects as of 30 September 23

	Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Expenditure				
3MG	151	12	12	139
Murdishaw	30	0	0	30
Equality Act Improvement Works	282	84	84	198
Kingsway Learning Centre Improved Facilities	36	0	0	36
Halton Lea TCF Roof Top Garden	35	0	0	35
Property Improvements	223	23	23	200
Waterloo Building Runcorn	93	0	0	93
Woodend - Former Unit 10 Catalyst Trade Park	200	161	161	39
Foundry Lane Residential Area	2634	1303	1303	1331
Police Station Demolition	406	0	0	406
Runcorn Station Building Development	515	30	30	485
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	17	0	0	17
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	291	0	0	291
Changing Places	212	52	52	160
Town Deal	2,740	585	586	2154
Total Capital	7,865	2,250	2,251	5,614

Murdishaw – The department has worked in partnership with Onward Homes to develop a community scheme which includes the establishment of a new CIC who will run a new venture from the former boxing club. A scheme of environmental improvements has been initiated across the estate with some signage improvements completed. Discussions are ongoing with Community Development and Murdishaw Community Centre to make improvements to the external space and refurbish the allotment space to allow for the local community to develop its allotment project.

Equality Act Budget- It is anticipated that the equality act budget will be fully spent by year end as the department have a number of projects that are currently on site or have yet to start which should be complete by year end.

Kingsway Learning Centre - There are plans for a PA system to be installed in October.

Property Improvements- It is anticipated that the Property Improvement budget will be fully spend by year end, the department have a number of projects which have been allocated to that budget, some of which are on site some of which have yet to commence on site nevertheless they will be complete by year end.

Waterloo Centre - Approval has now been obtained to demolish the building, as such works will commence prior to Christmas with the demolition. Final costings will be known during quarter 3.

Woodend - All works are complete except for the installation of the new gas supply which has been ordered and will hopefully be done prior to Christmas. The cost of the gas supply is circa £40k.

Foundry Lane – Project progressing on schedule with all ground remediation works now complete. Slight underspend against projected expenditure at 2022/23 year-end due to remediation works delays incurred during Q2 and Q3. Expenditure will fall back into line in 2023.

Police Station Demolition – Legal are in the process of finalising the coverage payment for Cheshire Police

Runcorn Station Building Development –A detailed delivery programme up to Approval In Principal stage has been produced and is 3 weeks ahead of schedule. A sponsor’s instruction has also been sent to partners to be signed off.

UKSF – Halton submitted an Investment Plan to the CA for three strands of its UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme – Town Centres; Local Culture, Arts and Heritage; Green, Resilient, Safe Communities. This amounts to £608k up to March 2025 and is a mix of capital and revenue.







Runcorn Waterfront Development - Preparation work is currently ongoing in respect of getting all the tender documentation ready to go through a procurement exercise in respect of the demolition of both Belvedere and Churchill Hall. It is hoped that the tender documents will be issued via the Chest in November with a realistic start on site not being until the New Year.


Changing Places - The changing places facility at the Stadium is now complete and operational. Works are progressing well on site at Victoria Park with completion due in late October. Works have also started on site at Halton Lea Library, completion being due by the end of November.

The Town Deal programme –. The Town Deal programme covers a number of projects to strengthen the town centre economy, including Brindley Theatre Enhancement, Creative and Digital Skills Centre, Health and Education Hub, High Street Connectivity, Town Centre New Homes, Station Enterprise Facility, and Unlock Runcorn. Business cases for all projects have been submitted and approved. Work will continue on site for the next 3 years.

ECONOMY, ENTERPRISE AND PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A




Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
EEP1	Capital Works Team	N/A	Increase the level of fee income by increasing the percentage charged or charging by time, including those works not currently charged for.	10	0	0		On target.
EEP4	Cleaning Services – Council Buildings	580	Review cleaning arrangements, with a focus on only emptying bins and cleaning toilets daily.	0	100	0		Until the accommodation review is complete, only limited savings will be made in 2024/25
EEP2	Caretaking & Security Services	641	A review and restructuring of caretaking arrangements.	0	52	0		Restructure will take place in 24/25. It is anticipated the full saving will not be met in year. Cannot achieve savings for security due to anti-social behaviour in Halton Lea. Police have advised security is kept on site until this is resolved.
			Reduce security cover at Halton Lea to provide opening/closing and then static guarding 7.00am to 7.30pm Monday to Friday, and 9.30am to 3.00pm on Saturdays to cover the opening hours of Halton Direct Link.	35	0	0		
EEP5	Corporate Buildings	927	Generate additional rental income by providing additional office space for external organisations at Rutland House, by letting out the remaining three floors.	120	0	0		Reflected in 2023/24 budget.
EEP6	Facilities Management	165	Restructure the team in light of an expression of interest for retirement.	44	0	0		Reflected in 2023/24 budget.

EEP8	Technical Support & Market Team	392	Restructuring of the team	98	0	0		Reflected in 2023/24 budget.
Total Economy, Enterprise & Property Department				307	152	0		




8.0 Application of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress Symbols

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Performance Indicator</u>
Green		Indicates that the <u>objective is on course to be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.
Amber		Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> whether the milestone/objective will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.
Red		Indicates that it is <u>highly likely or certain</u> that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.

Direction of Travel Indicator

Green		Indicates that performance is better as compared to the same period last year.
Amber		Indicates that performance is the same as compared to the same period last year.
Red		Indicates that performance is worse as compared to the same period last year.
N / A	N / A	Indicates that the measure cannot be compared to the same period last year.