

Public Document Pack



Executive Board

Thursday, 12 March 2026 2.00 p.m.
The Boardroom, Municipal Building

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Abbott'.

Interim Chief Executive

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

PART 1

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1. MINUTES	1 - 9
2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item.	
3. CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO	
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*Please contact Gill Ferguson 0151 511 8059 or
gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Committee is on Thursday, 16 April 2026*

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PART II	
<p>In this case the Board has a discretion to exclude the press and public and, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, it is RECOMMENDED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, having been satisfied that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.</p>	
9. ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO	
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(B) REVIEW OF TELEHEALTHCARE SERVICES

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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 12 February 2026 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Bevan, Ball, Dennett, Harris, T. McInerney, P. Nolan, Thompson, Wall and Wright

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson, W. Rourke, R. Rout, S. Foy and H. Hamlett

Also in attendance: Councillor Ratcliffe

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

	<i>Action</i>
<p>EXB91 MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2026, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p> <p>LEADER'S PORTFOLIO</p>	
<p>EXB92 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2026/27</p> <p>The Board received a report of the Chief Executive, which set out the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the 2026/27 Municipal Year, which was appended to the report for information.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the Calendar of Meetings for the 2026/27 Municipal Year, as appended to the report.</p> <p>CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO</p>	<p>Interim Chief Executive</p>
<p>EXB93 BUDGET 2026/27 - KEY DECISION</p> <p>The Board considered a report from the Director - Finance, which outlined a recommendation to Council in respect of the Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax</p>	

for 2026/27.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), approved at the Executive Board meeting on 11 September 2025, had identified funding gaps of around £44.937m in 2026/27, £58.964m in 2027/28, £74.656m in 2028/29, £94.107m in 2029/30 and £118.613m in 2030/31.

In terms of consultation, it was noted that the Council used various methods to listen to the views of the public, and Members own experiences through their Ward work was an important part of that process. Individual consultations took place in respect of specific budget proposals and equality impact assessments would be completed where necessary.

The Board received regular reports detailing spending in the current year against the budget. The latest report indicated that spending was forecast to be over budget in the current year by approximately £1.281m against a net budget of £183.052m.

The proposed revenue budget for 2026/27 totalled £224.237m; the departmental analysis of this was shown in Appendix B. A total of £5.158m of savings were proposed and were detailed in Appendix E.

Table B in the report demonstrated the Council position where it would be unable to present a balanced 2026/27 budget without seeking Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) from Government. Receipts from Council Tax and Business Rates were insufficient to fund the forecast net spend for 2026/27. Table B forecast that Council would have to borrow £34.966m in 2026/27 to provide a balanced budget. On 18 December 2025, an application for EFS for the 2026/27 financial year was submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Board was advised that the proposed budget incorporated the grant figures announced in the Local Government Finance Settlement. Several updates had been made to Halton's Core Spending Power (CSP) at the Final Local Government Final Settlement. Income received from the Mid-Mersey Business Rates Pool were included within Halton's 2025/26 baseline funding position, which had increased the funding to be received in 2026/27 and 2027/28 from transitional arrangements. A small uplift to the Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant had been made to reflect new burdens arising from the Renters' Rights Act. Government had also announced a

new Recovery Grant Uplift for authorities in receipt of Recovery Grant Funding that were due to see their CSP rise by less than the 17% national average over the three years covered by the Settlement. These changes were worth an additional £3.5m, £3.7m, and £4.7m to Halton in 2026/27, 2027/28, and 2028/29 respectively. The report outlined the Government consultation on the Fair Funding Review and the impact of the review on Halton's CSP.

Further information was also provided on Halton's Council Tax, Parish precepts, Police, Fire and Liverpool City Region (LCR) Mayor precepts, Business Rates, the Capital Programme, Prudential Code, School Budgets, Dedicated Schools Grant position, adequacy of reserves and exceptional financial support.

The Board acknowledged the support of the Member of Parliament for Halton and Halewood, Derek Twigg who had lobbied the Government on behalf of the Council in respect of the Local Government Finance Settlement.

On behalf of the Board, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services thanked the Council Finance team for their work in preparing the Budget document.

Reason(s) for Decision

To seek approval for the Council's revenue budget, capital programme and council tax for 2026/27.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

A number of alternative budget proposals have been considered by the Budget Working Group.

Implementation Date

12 February 2026.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended

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

Director of Finance

3) to approve the budget savings set out in Appendix E.

EXB94 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2026/27

The Board considered a report of the Director – Finance, on the Council’s Capital Strategy for 2026/27.

It was reported that all councils were required to produce a Capital Strategy annually, the aim of which was to ensure that the Council understood the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.

Members were advised that the Capital Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, included on the same agenda. This detailed the expected activities of the treasury management function and incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy for 2026/27. It was noted that the successful delivery of the Capital Strategy would assist the Council in planning and funding its capital expenditure over the next three years.

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

Director of Finance

EXB95 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2026/27

The Board received the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, (TMSS) which incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Strategy for 2026/27.

The TMSS was appended to the report and detailed the expected activities of the treasury function in the forthcoming financial year (2026/27). Its production and submission to the Council was a requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code.

The Local Government Act 2003 required the Council to have regard to the Prudential Code and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years, to ensure that the Council’s capital investment plans were affordable, prudent and sustainable.

The Act therefore required the Council to set out its

treasury strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy (AIS), which set out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. Government guidance noted that authorities could combine the TMSS and the AIS into one report, which the Council had done and was included in Section 4.

Members noted that the production of a Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement was required and a formal statement for approval was contained within the report at paragraph 2.3, with the full policy shown in Appendix A.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to adopt the policies, strategies, statements, prudential and treasury indicators outlined in the report.

Director of Finance

EXB96 REVIEW OF COUNCILWIDE FEES AND CHARGES

The Board considered a report of the Director - Finance, on the review of the Council wide fees and charges for 2026/27 for services provided by the Council's Directorates.

The Board was advised that, as part of the budget preparations for 2026/27, a review of fees and charges had been carried out. The aim in setting fees and charges was to ensure that the Council fully recovered the cost incurred in providing the service. However this was more difficult given the impact of inflation uncertainty, wage increases and the unpredictable nature of utility costs. These were detailed in the report and noted as including demand, competition and statutory elements.

Attached as Appendix A was the proposed schedule of statutory fees for 2026/27 and the chargeable rates for The Brindley Theatre and the Registrar's Service were attached at Appendix B and C respectively.

RESOLVED: That the proposed fees and charges for 2026/27 as set out in Appendix A and for 2027/28, as set out in Appendices B and C, be approved.

Director of Finance

EXB97 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board received a report from the Director – Finance, which advised that under the amended provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council was able to grant discretionary rate relief to any business

ratepayer. An application for discretionary rate relief had been received from Power In Partnership Ltd and details of the application were set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That the application for 75% discretionary rate relief from Power In Partnership Ltd in respect of Unit 10, Expressway Industrial Estate, Pimlico Road, Runcorn, be approved for the period 1 April 2023 to 23 June 2025.

Director of Finance

EXB98 INTEGRATION OF HR AND PAYROLL MODULE INTO THE UNIT4 FINANCE SYSTEM

The Board received a report which sought approval to integrate a HR and Payroll module into the Unit4 ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) Finance System and the inclusion of the project within the Capital Programme. Following final approval, the HR and Payroll implementation would be scheduled for September 2026, with planned activities covering system build, testing, staff training, cutover planning and go-live.

The integration and single system solution would:

- enable the removal of current inter-application administrative procedures for transferring data from one system to another;
- allow for the decommissioning of some internal systems and eradicate the need for ongoing development and maintenance of these systems;
- provide a reduction in day to day management time across the Council;
- rationalise resources, justifying the principles of Invest to Save and Best Value, with financial payback.

The annual capital financing cost of funding the implementation over 10 years would be approximately £60,225 per annum.

RESOLVED: That

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

Director of HR and Corporate Affairs (Interim) /Director of Transformation (Interim)

ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB99 UPDATE ON PROGRESS TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT FOLLOWING THE ADULTS DIRECTORATE'S CQC ASSURANCE RATING OF GOOD

The Board considered a report of the Interim Director – Commissioning and Provision, that provided an update on the progress the Adults Directorate had made against the CQC Local Authority Framework following their assessment and rating as 'Good' in July 2025. From the CQC report the Directorate had further scrutinised the analysis of Halton's Services and performance to consider areas where its continuous improvement needed to be focussed. An Improvement Action Plan had been drawn up as a result and a working group met monthly to look at progress against these action and developments were moving forward. Progress to date against the Improvement Plan was set out in Appendix Two.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB100 ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION: CONFIRMATION - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on outcome of the public consultation on the immediate Article 4 Direction made on 24 September 2025, removing permitted development rights for the change of use of a building from that of a use falling within Class C3 (dwelling house) to that falling within C4 (small HMOs) for parts of the borough.

Following the conclusion of the consultation period, it was noted that no matters had arisen that were material to the decision and it was not proposed to recommend any changes to the immediate Article 4 Direction that had been previously approved by the Board on 11 September 2025.

RESOLVED: That the immediate Article 4 Direction removing permitted development rights for the material change of use of a building from a use falling within Class C3 (dwelling houses) to that falling within Class C4 (HMOs) made on 24 September 2025 is confirmed.

Director -
Planning and
Transportation

EXB101 ALBERT ROAD (NORTH) PEDESTRIANISATION SCHEME

The Board considered a report that sought approval to commence the pedestrianisation scheme along a section of Albert Road (north) between Deacon Road/Bradley Way and Robert Street, Widnes. The report set out the improvements that the scheme would bring, consultations which had taken place with Local Councillors, transport providers, businesses, residents and the positive public support for the scheme.

Arising from the discussion, Councillor Wall, asked if local businesses were in support of the scheme and officers advised that no objections had been received.

Director -
Planning and
Transportation

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) approves the Albert Road (north) pedestrianisation scheme for delivery, as set out in the report and shown on the Plan in Appendix A; and
- 2) the Director Planning and Transport, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal be delegated to deal with any matters relating to the delivery of this scheme.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PORTFOLIO

EXB102 PUBLIC SECTOR DECARBONISATION FUND - PICOW FARM ROAD DEPOT

The Board considered a report which set out details of grant funding awarded to the Council via the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund (PSDF) and sought approval to implement energy efficiency measures at Picow Farm Road, Runcorn. In 2025, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) had submitted a bid to Phase 4 of the PSDF in respect of the following buildings in Halton:

- Picow Farm,
- Kingsway Learning Centre,
- Runcorn Town Hall.

In respect of Halton, a total of £2,816,409.20 had been awarded. The initial focus of the work would be at Picow Farm Road and the LCRCA had conducted a tender process; and Optimus were appointed as the approved contractor. The cost of the works were within the overall

projected cost of £1,161,300 and the Council would need to make a contribution of between £162,000 and £200,000.

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

Interim Chief
Executive

MINUTES ISSUED: 18 February 2026.

CALL-IN: 25 February 2026 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 18 February 2026.

Meeting ended at 2.16 p.m.

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 12 March 2026

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Councilwide Spending as at 31 January 2026

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To report the Council's overall revenue net spend position as at 31 January 2026 together with a 2025/26 forecast outturn position.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That;

- (i) Executive Directors continue to implement the approved 2025/26 saving proposals as detailed in Appendix 4;**
- (ii) Executive Directors continue to identify areas where they can further reduce their directorate's spending or generate income, in order to ensure the council wide forecast outturn overspend position for the year remains within budget.**
- (iii) This report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board, in order to ensure they have a full appreciation of the councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility.**
- (iv) Council be asked to approve the revisions to the capital programme set-out in paragraph 3.31 and incorporated within Appendix 5;**
- (v) The forecast position for High Needs funded pupil costs set-out in Para 3.18 to 3.24 and Appendix 3, be noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Revenue Spending

- 3.1 Appendix 1 presents a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 31 January 2026 (period 10) and Appendix 2 provides detailed figures for each individual Department.
- 3.2 In overall terms, net Council spending as at 31 January 2026 is £1.236m below budget. The outturn forecast for the year estimates that net spending

will be below budget by £1.273m based on current assumptions. The position represents a significant improvement on forecasts from earlier in the year. Bringing forecast spend down to now be within the overall budget for the year, is significant positive progress by all Departments.

- 3.3 It should be noted that the 2025/26 budget was set using £29.385m of Exceptional Financial Support (EFS), therefore, it is essential for spending to remain below budget. In addition, to assist with bringing outturn spend within budget, there has been use of one-off grant monies notably within Children's and Adult Social Care. It will be important to continue to control spending going forward into 2026/27, when these one-off monies may not be available.
- 3.4 The forecast outturn shows an improved position of £2.554m from that reported at the end of November 2025. This improvement can be seen across all directorates, a few notable areas include:
- **Adult Social Care Directorate** – The forecast outturn position for the directorate has improved by £0.499m from that reported as at the end of November 2025. Some of this is due to capitalisation of qualifying staffing and equipment costs against the Disabled Facility Grant (DFG), which might not be possible in future years. There has also been a decrease in Domiciliary and Supported Living costs due to a reduction in numbers and average package costs. This has been supported through the Prevention and Wellbeing Service, whose work has revised the focus upon prevention and wellbeing with improved signposting to community based services.
 - **Children and Families Department** – The outturn position for the department has improved by £1.437m since the last reporting period. The Department is now forecasting that net spend for the year will be £1.228m under budget, for the first time in a number of years. Forecast employee costs for the year have reduced by £0.951m, largely due to utilisation of a number of grants. At this stage this approach is considered to be non-recurring, as the grants will be required in future years for other purposes.
 - **Planning & Transportation Department** – The outturn position for the Department has improved by £0.414m from the last reported position. The main contributing factor to this has been the release of a provision of £0.3m which had been set aside for legal costs relating to the Pavilions enquiry. A successful challenge against the decision has been made and this provision is unlikely to be required, therefore, the funds have been made available to help with the Council's in-year financial position.
- 3.5 It remains vital that the current level of focus and control is maintained, as any further improvements to the financial position during the last two months of the financial year will continue to mitigate against the need for EFS borrowing and the ongoing revenue costs associated with this.

- 3.6 As part of the work to ensure spend for the year remains within budget, monthly financial recovery meetings continue to be held, where Directorate leadership teams provide details of the actions being taken to keep net spending within budget.
- 3.7 On 10 February 2025 Government issued a letter to the Council confirming it was minded to approve a capitalisation direction of a total not exceeding £52.8 million. The total is broken down by each financial year of the Council's request:
- £20.8 million in 2024-25.
 - £32 million in 2025-26.
- 3.8 Consistent with those councils who have previously sought Exceptional Financial Support, in order for Government to provide a final capitalisation direction, the Council is required to undergo an external assurance review which will include, but will not be limited to, an assessment of the council's financial position and governance arrangements. The Council took a proactive approach and in September 2025 commissioned the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (Cipfa) to undertake such a review of the Council's financial resilience and financial management arrangements. The review has been completed and the Council are in the process of drawing up an action plan in line recommendations made. The Cipfa report has also been shared with MHCLG to provide assurance alongside the Council's EFS application.
- 3.9 Council approved the annual budget of £183.052m on 05 March 2025, and in doing so agreed to the use of EFS totalling £29.385m. The cost of EFS is significant over the long term for the Council, for every £1m of borrowing undertaken will cost the Council approximately £100k over each of the next 20 years. It is therefore imperative that action continues to be taken to reduce spending over the remainder of the year and that approved saving proposals are implemented, to minimise the amount of EFS borrowing ultimately required.
- 3.10 Within the Corporate and Democracy table (included at Appendix B), current year costs relating to EFS have been included. It is forecast the cost of EFS interest will be £1.096m with repayment of the principal debt totalling £0.500m.
- 3.11 The figures reflect a prudent yet realistic view of spend and income levels through to the end of the year. Work will continue to progress on updating the financial position as more information is made available.
- 3.12 In setting the 2025/26 budget Council approved significant levels of growth to ensure the budget was more relevant to the planned level of spend. Budget growth of £33.555m (22%) was added to the 2025/26 budget to bring the approved net budget to £183.052m.
- 3.13 There are continued demand pressures on the budget which are above growth levels provided in the 2025/26 budget, these are more notable against Adult Community Care and Home to School Transport. Levels of

demand covering Children in Care appear to be under control, although still too high for an authority the size of Halton. Further information is provided within the report on the main budgetary pressure areas.

- 3.14 Another major factor in achieving a balanced budget position for the year, is to ensure all approved savings are fully implemented. In total, savings of £7.325m were agreed for the current year and Appendix 4 provides detail on progress against the approved savings. As per Appendix 4, savings have been RAG rated to inform on progress and high level summary of this is provided below.

Department	On-course to be achieved	Uncertain or too early to say	Highly likely or certain will not be achieved
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adult Social Care	100	125	1,655
Finance	0	100	90
Legal	6	0	0
Children & Family Services	1,500	400	22
Education, Inclusion and Provision	0	0	300
Community and Greenspaces	282	0	0
Economy, Enterprise and Property	0	0	100
Planning & Transportation	0	0	100
Public Health	45	0	0
Corporate	100	300	2,000
Totals	2,033	925	4,367

- 3.15 The use and cost of agency staff continues to be one of the main contributing factors to the overspend position for the year. Support from the Transformation Programme is ongoing to reduce reliance upon agency staff.
- 3.16 Analysis of agency spend for the year to date, together with comparative analysis of 2024/25 costs, is included in the table below.

	2025/26						2024/25
	As at 31 May 2025	As at 31 July 2025	As at 30 September 2025	As at 30 November 2025	As at 31 January 2026	Total 2025/26 To Date	As at 31 March 2025
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adult Social Care	955	1,687	805	573	1,181	5,201	6,035
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	130	145	146	118	95	634	810
Children & Family Services	574	739	594	564	426	2,897	5,220
Community & Greenspace	71	59	52	53	99	334	447
Corporate & Democracy	0	0	0	6	0	6	0
Economy, Enterprise & Property	60	77	86	72	88	383	417
Education, Inclusion & Provision	54	72	48	56	64	294	295
Finance	3	0	1	1	6	11	114
Legal & Democratic Services	63	59	43	37	10	212	881
Planning & Transportation	2	0	0	0	0	2	210
Public Health & Public Protection	0	0	0	0	0	0	22
Total	1,912	2,838	1,775	1,480	1,969	9,974	14,451

Revenue - Operational Spending

3.17 Within the overall budget forecast position for the period, the key budget pressure areas are as follows;

(i) Children and Families Department

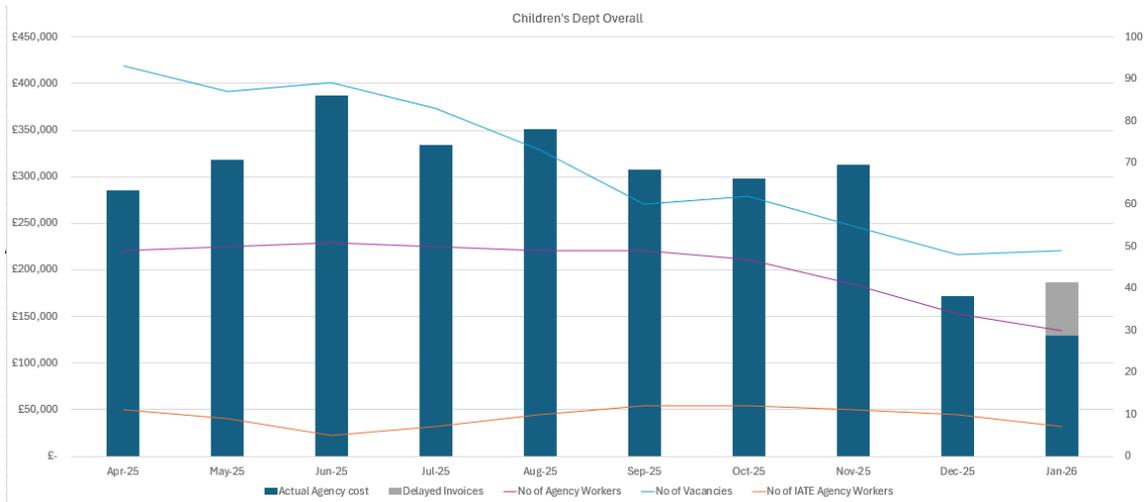
The net departmental outturn position is estimated to be under budget profile at the end of financial year 2025/26 by £1.228m. Since last reported at 30 November 25 there has been a reduction in forecast net spend for the Department of £1.4m.

Employee costs are forecast to be under budget profile by the end of financial year by £1.047m which is a reduction of £0.951m since last reported at 30 November 2025.

A large proportion of the reduction relates to the utilisation of a number of grants that are available to the Service, this has supported the reduction in forecast overspend.

The chart below demonstrates the following information, for the period April to January 2026:

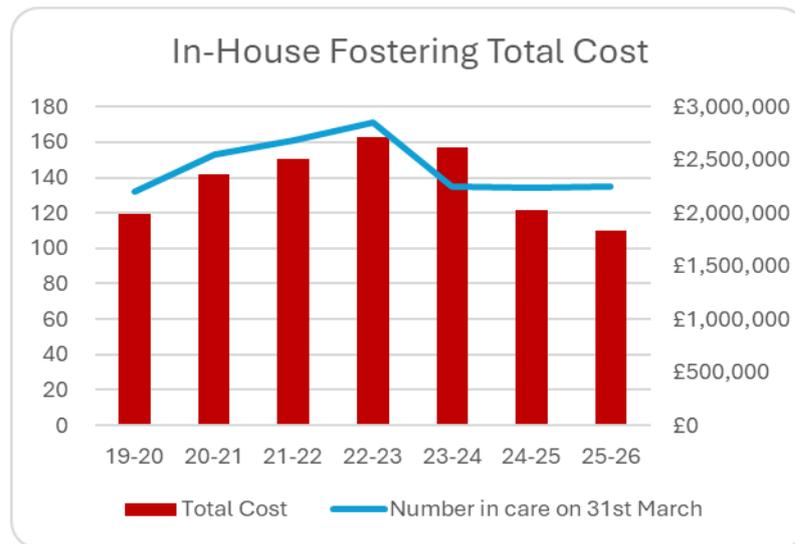
- Agency costs
- The number of agency staff that the Council have received an invoice for within each month
- The number of vacancies across the Children and Families Department
- The number of staff that are currently in addition to the establishment (IATE)



Agency spend across the Children and Families Department remains high, with spend totalling £2.897m, however, this is a £1.538m reduction in spend compared to the same period in 2024/25.

Fostering

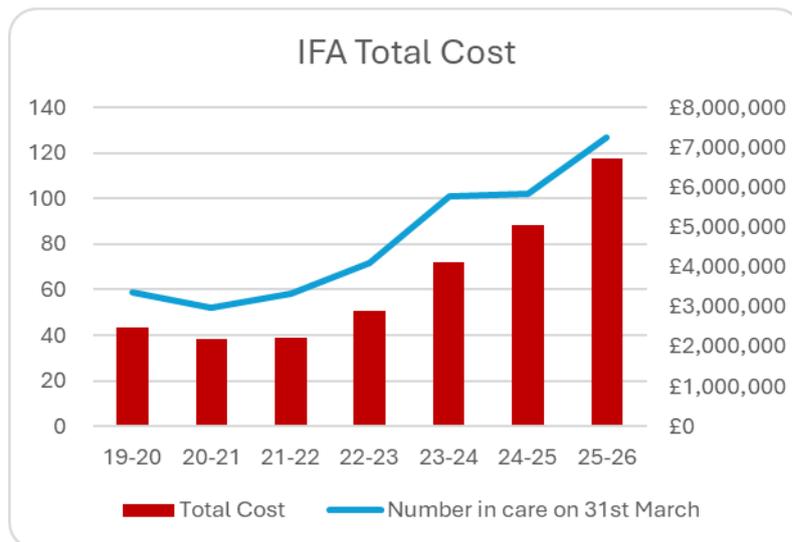
In-House fostering placements are estimated to be £0.587m under budget profile for 2025/26.



Work continues to recruit and retain Halton's In-house foster carers, along with training to develop carers enabling them to accommodate more specialist placements. This therefore means that costs could increase. However, the ability to accommodate young people within in-house provision provides a substantial saving in comparison to Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) or residential care.

Increasing numbers of children in care and insufficient in-house fostering provision has meant increased reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA). Higher numbers of children placed within

IFA provision and increased IFA rates has resulted in an estimated forecast overspend for the end of 2025/26 as £1.255m.



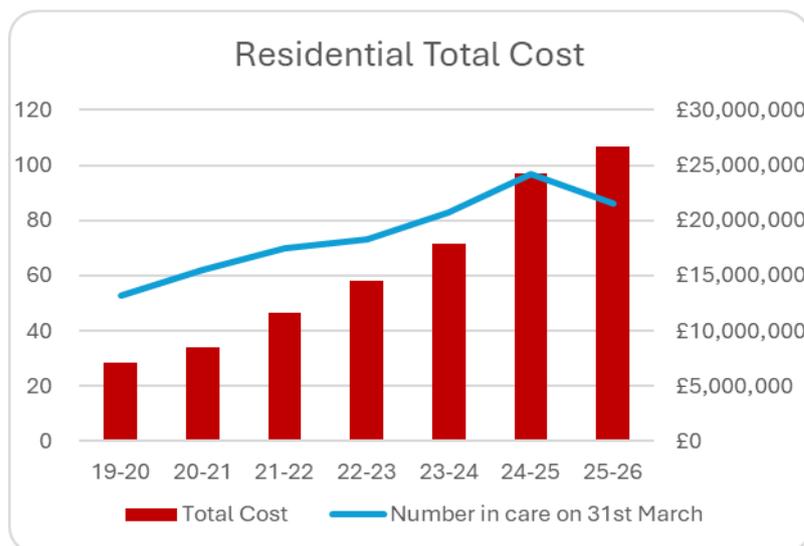
Residential Care

Out of Borough Residential Care continues to be a budget pressure for the Children and Families Department as the costs of residential care have continued to rise year on year. The numbers of young people in residential placements has reduced since the start of the financial year but individual care package prices have increased.

Residential care costs are forecast to be under budget profile by £0.749m which is a reduction of £0.236m since last reported on 30 November 2025.

A number of initiatives are taking place to help reduce residential spend, including a High Cost Placement Panel, Medium Cost Placement Panel and particular cohort focused projects. The panels have been created to ensure that an effective care plan is in place for all young people, at the best available cost of placement and this work is ongoing.

The graph below illustrates the rising costs of residential care, for consistency this does not include the costs of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) as these costs were not included in previous years.



The table below demonstrates the number of children that the department are forecasting to be in Residential Care at 31 March 26.

Provision	Weekly Costs	31-Jan-26	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
Residential	£1000 - £3000	6	715,363
Residential	£3001 - £5000	30	7,112,414
Residential	£5001 - £7000	24	7,751,308
Residential	£7001 - £15982	17	8,730,167
Secure	£6397 - £8137		
Leaving Care	£443 - £7175	8	1,887,809
Parent & Child	£2000 - £5500	2	524,381
Total:		87	26,721,440

(ii) Adult Social Care Directorate

Community Care

The net spend position for the Community Care budget at the end of January 2026 is currently £0.362m over budget and the year-end anticipated spend is forecast to be £0.417m over budget.

In November the forecast was £0.683m over budget so there has been a reduction of £0.266m.

This is mainly a decrease in Domiciliary and Supported Living due to a reduction in numbers and average package costs. The cost of Direct Payments has also reduced due to reimbursements.

Furthermore, at the beginning of the financial year and based upon intelligence of the local population of Halton, 4.9% demographic growth was included in the year-end forecast which has not materialised. This is mainly due to the Prevention and Wellbeing Service (PWS). Their work has revised the focus upon prevention

and wellbeing with improved signposting to community services. PWS utilise a huddle approach to effectively screen referrals to determine whether community assets can be accessed before requiring commissioned services. For people requiring a social care assessment the waiting time for this assessment has reduced, contributing to more timely intervention and possible crisis avoidance/admission to hospital. As at 30 November 2025 approximately 60% of referrals were being signposted to another service or community resource (including carers assessments) or required no further intervention.

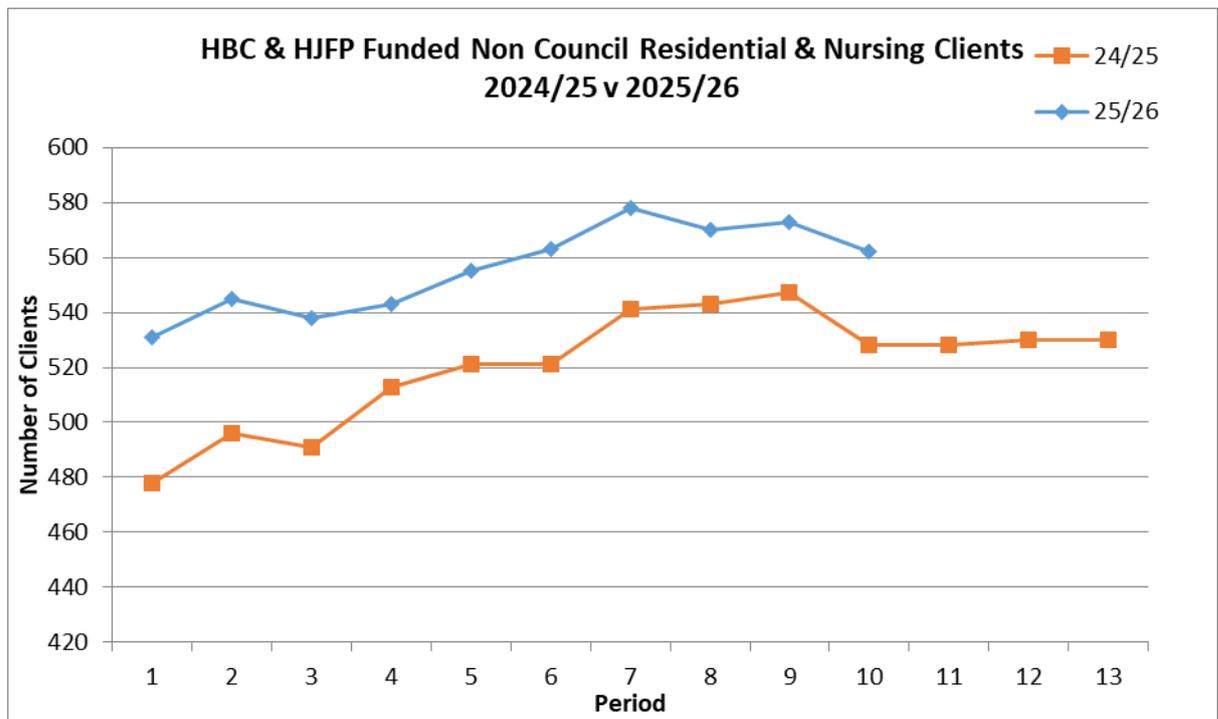
Scrutiny of this budget is ongoing and budget recovery meetings continue with current focus on the following areas to reduce spend further:-

- Review 1 to 1 packages of care for appropriateness
- Identify and signpost new 15 minute packages of domiciliary care (medicine prompts) which should be commissioned and funded by Health under the Care Act.
- Ensure assessments conducted on discharge from hospital are complete and appropriate
- Maximise internal care home capacity

Residential Care

There are currently 562 residents in external residential/nursing care homes as at the end of January 2026. Compared to the 2024/25 average of 520 this is an increase of 8%. The average cost of a package of care is currently £910.60 compared to £850.24 at the end of 2024/25 an increase of 7%.

The graph below illustrates the demand for all residential and nursing placements



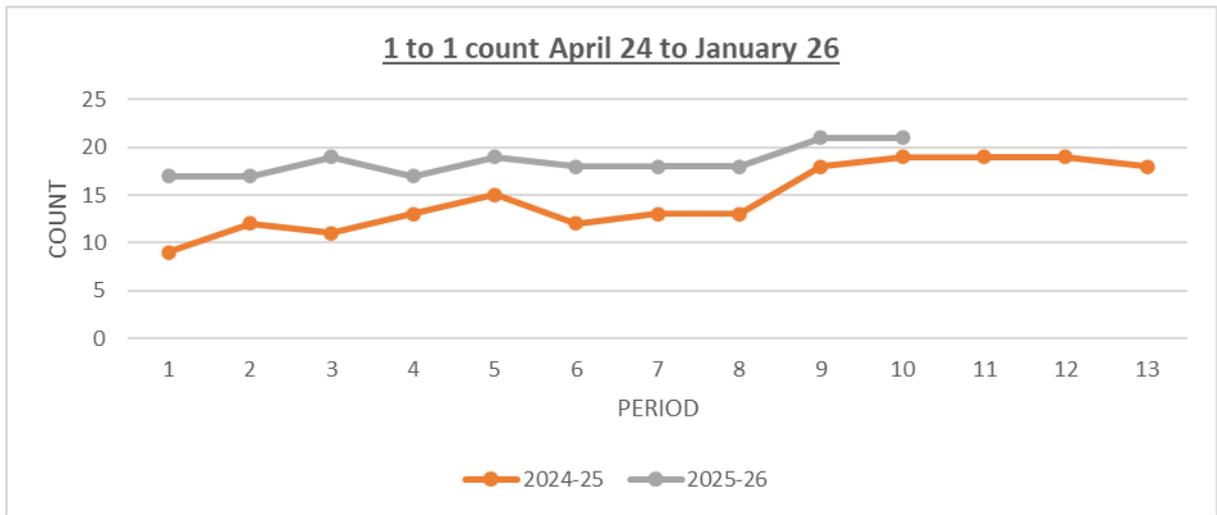
1 to 1 Support In Care Homes

Payments for 1 to 1 support in care homes continue to exert pressure on the budget. These are generally to mitigate the risk from falls particularly on discharge from hospital. The full year cost for 2024/25 was £837,882.

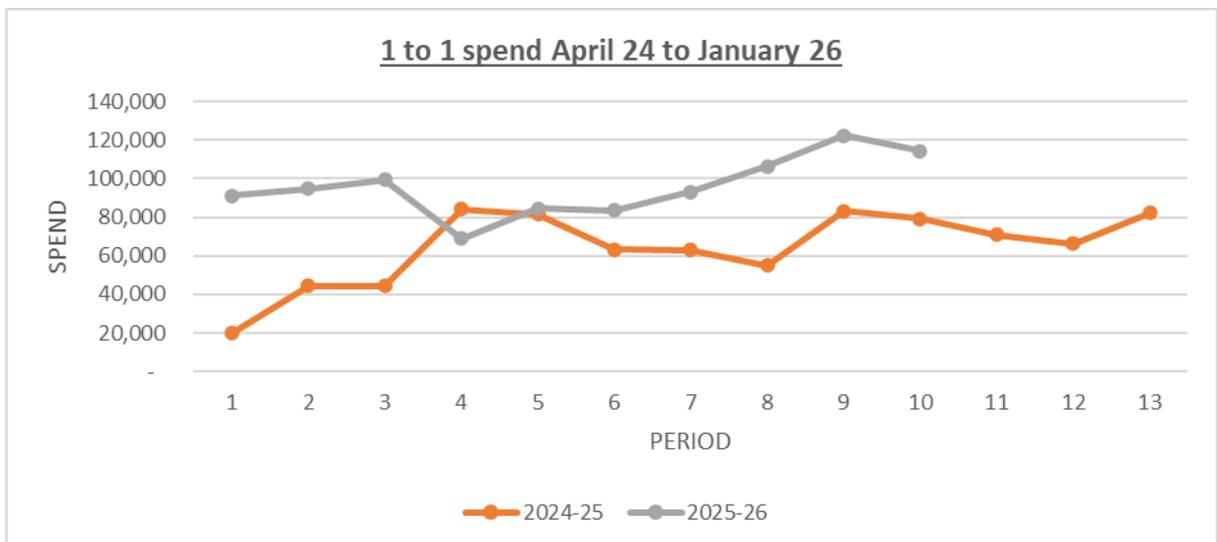
The graph below shows the number of service users receiving 1 to 1 care by period. Currently there are 21 compared to 19 at the same point last year. This is an increase of 10.5%, and an increase of 16% since last reported in November. It is expected that these should reduce as packages continue to be reviewed, however commissioning of new packages with a 1:1 care element are resulting in numbers remaining high.

Care homes are providing monitoring reports as part of the review process to establish if there is a need for 1 to 1 care.

Going forward 13 Enhanced Dementia beds are planned to open at St Lukes which should help to reduce the need for 1 to 1 care.



The following graph shows the spend on 1 to 1 care by period. This shows that the monthly spend dropped sharply in July as packages were reviewed and 1 service user became continuing healthcare funded. However, spend has continued to increase. The anticipated cost for 1 to 1 care at the current rate will be circa £1.3m at the end of the financial year.



Domiciliary Care & Supported Living

As at January there are 771 service users receiving a package of care at home, compared to the average in 2024/25 of 754, an increase of 2.2%. The average cost of a package of care is currently £526.47 compared with the average of £450.64 in 2024/25 an increase of 16.8%.

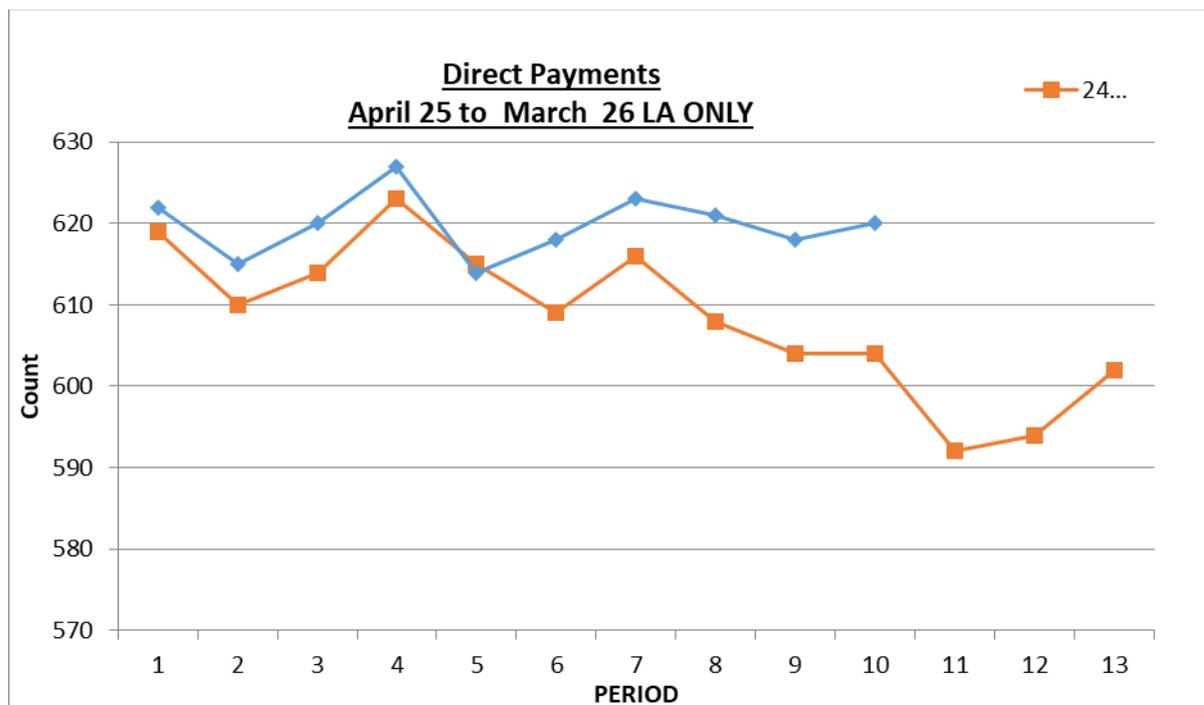
The graph below illustrates the demand for the service from April 2024 to January 2026.



Direct Payments

There are currently 620 service users receiving a direct payment (DP) compared to the average in 2024/25 of 608, an increase of 1.9%. However, there has been a small reduction compared with 622 in April 2025. The average cost of a package of care has also decreased during the year from £571.26 to £489.47, a reduction of 14.3%.

The graph below shows movement throughout the year.



Care Homes

The spend for the first ten months of the 2025/26 Financial Year to 31 January 2026 is £0.194m above budget profile, with an estimated spend above budget for the year of £0.389m. This primarily relates to unbudgeted agency staff costs, and a current shortfall against target of client finance and out of borough income.

Employee related expenditure is anticipated to be above budget at the end of financial year by £0.189m. Projections take into account agency spending patterns over the previous 3 financial years.

Despite the efficiencies being achieved through absence management, the recruitment of staff is a continued pressure across the care homes, where there remains a high number of staff vacancies. A proactive rolling recruitment exercise is ongoing within the care homes and is supported by HR.

Adult Social Care (excluding Care Homes and Community Care)

Net Department Expenditure is currently £0.654m over budget at 31 January 2026. Current expenditure projections indicate an overspend for the full financial year in the region of £0.698m.

The projected full-year cost for employees is under the annual budget by £0.087m. This a reduction of £0.302m from the projected full year over budget spend as at period 8.

There continues to be a reduction in agency use across the divisions due to filling of vacancies. The reduction in use of agency staff has been reflected in the forecasted spend until the end of the financial year. Agency spend across the Department as a whole at the end of January 2026 stood at £1.349m, with a full year spend of £1.412m projected.

Supplies and Services costs within the Department are being driven by an increased volume of caseload with respect to Deprivation of Liberty Standards (DoLs) assessments. Spend to January 2026 was £0.163m, with a total spend for the financial year forecast to be £0.253m. Demand for this Service has increased significantly over the last few years, with this trend continuing throughout the current financial year.

Income for the Department is under the budgeted income target by £0.658m with a projected under achievement by the end of the financial year being £0.680m. The main areas making up the under achievement of income are Community Meals, Telehealthcare, Transport, Positive Behaviour Service and the Day Services Trading areas.

(iii) Education, Inclusion and Provision

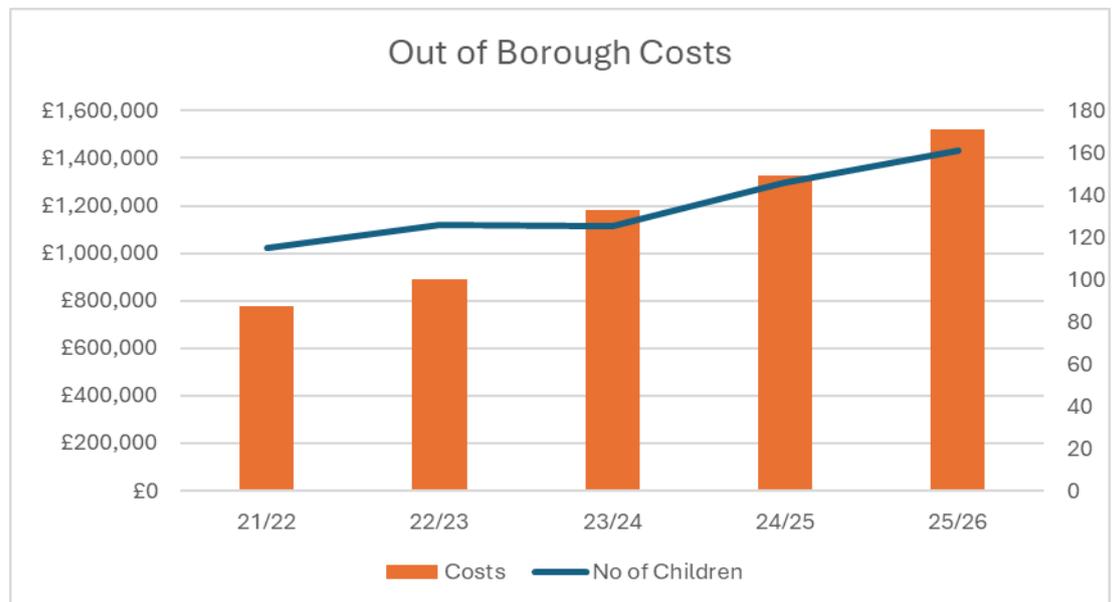
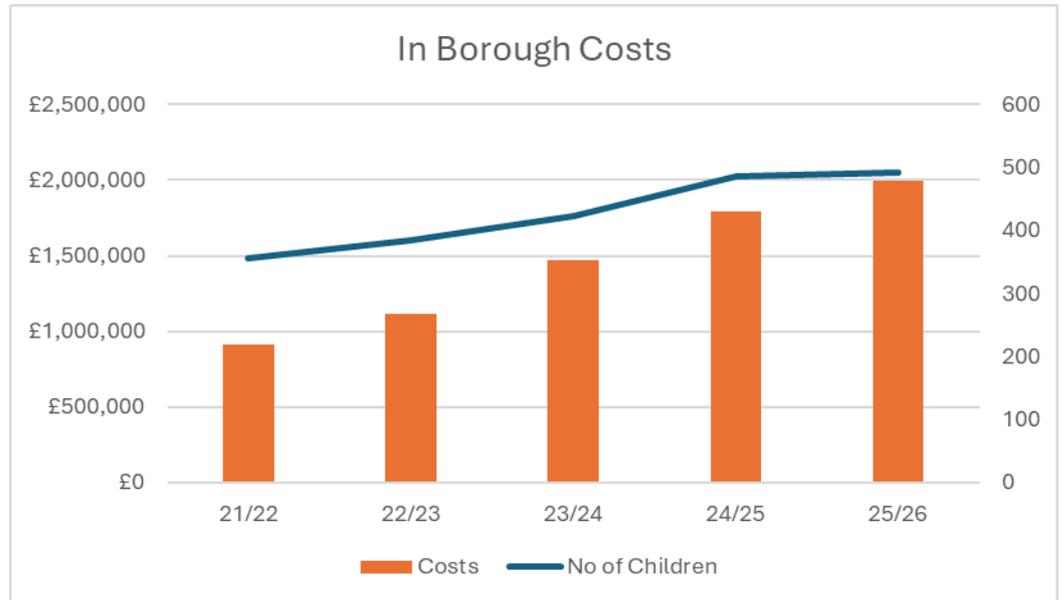
Net departmental expenditure is £0.833m over budget at the end of January. The forecast outturn for 2025/26 is currently an overspend against budget of £1.105m.

Schools Transport is the main budgetary demand pressure for Education, Inclusion and Provision. The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils with transport. This is split into two main areas of SEN pupils attending In-Borough and Out-of-Borough Schools.

Current records show 653 service users, the majority of which attend schools within the Borough. The Out-of-Borough overspend has decreased compared to the previous year's overspend of £0.799m due to £0.712m added to the budget in 2025/26 as growth. School Transport costs have remained steady since the last reported period.

A consultation was undertaken during 2025 regarding changes to the school transport eligibility criteria. A revised policy has subsequently been approved and is being implemented, which should see reductions in costs over the coming years.

The graphs below show the trend in the number of SEN children using this service and the associated costs.



(iv) Planning and Transportation

As at 31 January 2026, the Department’s forecast net outturn spend for the year will be £1.804m under budget.

At the end of the 2024/25 financial year a provision of £0.300m was provided to prepare for a potential cost against the Council in relation to the Pavilions enquiry. A successful challenge against that decision has now been made and therefore this provision is unlikely

to be required and has been released to help with the in-year budget position.

Employee related spend is forecast to be significantly under budget (£0.519m) for the year as there are a large number of vacancies that have not yet been filled. This is as a result of pending restructures across the Department and therefore, actual costs for next year are expected to be higher once the restructures are implemented.

Overall, forecast income for the Department will be £0.915m over the budgeted income target. This is largely due to planning fees and permit income. It is anticipated that the high level of permit income seen in previous years will eventually drop off, but it currently continues due to the large number of housing developers requiring permission to install utilities. There are a number of reasons for the current over achievement of permit income, including:

- The number of permits being received has been higher than usual due to several companies carrying out fibre roll outs and upgrades. This seems to be coming to an end and the number of permits relating to fibre are most likely to decrease for the remainder of the year.
- As a result of the increased amount of works, this also increases potential for fixed penalty notices, S74 charges, and defect charges to be issued against permit holders. As the number of works decreases, so will the associated charges.
- There is higher than usual income associated to traffic management due to the amount of works taking place since April 2025.
- There are more inspections now than in previous years, which has also increased income.

Dedicated Schools Grant

- 3.18 As at 31 March 2025 the Council had a deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserve of £14.469m. This is as an impact of the increasing demand and costs of High Needs SEND pupils.
- 3.19 The DSG deficit currently has no impact on the Council's General Fund as Government have in place a statutory override which allows the Council to carry the deficit forward each year on its balance sheet. The override is due to end at 31 March 2028, at which point it was expected the accrued DSG deficit would have to be funded from Council resources. Government have recently confirmed that from 01 April 2028 responsibility for overspends against DSG will switch from Local Government to Central Government. Government have also confirmed their intention to fund up to 90% of High Need deficits as at 31 March 2026. This will be dependent on the Council preparing and implementing a SEND Reform Plans, details of which are awaited from Government.

- 3.20 Forecast 2025/26 costs for all anticipated demands on High Needs funding are estimated to be £42.981m, which is a substantial amount in excess of the budgeted High Needs allocation of £29.760m. After applying a 2% across-the-board increase to High Needs funding rates, the Council began the financial year anticipating a DSG shortfall of £9.4m, however, the first ten months of 2025-26 have seen that increase by £3.8m.
- 3.21 The projected overspend is in the main due to significant expansions in numbers and specifications of resource bases, increasing numbers and costs of high-cost specialist placements in and out of Borough, and increases in numbers and value of EHCP (Education & Health Care Plan) assessments.
- 3.22 It is forecast the cumulative DSG deficit as at 31 March 2026 will reach £27.690m.
- 3.23 There is a cost to the General Fund in managing the DSG deficit, which relates to the cashflow impact of having a significant deficit position. The deficit position results in more borrowing costs for the Council which cannot be charged against the DSG budget and are therefore a cost to the Council's revenue budget. Interest costs in the current year are estimated to be £0.891m.
- 3.24 Appendix 3 provides details of the High Needs 2025/26 forecast outturn position.

Collection Fund

- 3.25 The council tax collection rate through to the end of January 2026 is 88.86% which is 0.15% lower than the collection rate at the same point last year.

Debt relating to previous years continues to be collected, and the Council utilises powers through charging orders, orders for sale, and attachment to earnings/benefits to secure debts. £2.347m has so far been collected this year in relation to previous years' debt.

- 3.26 Business rate collection through to the end of January 2026 is 91.71% which is 0.99% lower than the collection rate at the same point last year.

£1.060m has so far been collected this year in relation to previous years' debt.

Review of Reserves

- 3.27 As at 31 January 2026 the Council's General Reserve is unchanged from the previous period at £5.149m, which represents 2.81% of the Council's 2025/26 net budget. This level of General Reserve is considered to be the minimum level and provides little provision for unforeseen or exceptional costs going forward. Therefore, the Medium Term Financial Strategy includes growth for the General Reserve at a rate of £2m per year.

- 3.28 There is a regular review of earmarked reserves undertaken to determine whether they can be released in part or in full to assist with funding the Council's current financial challenges, recognising that this only provides one-year funding solutions.

Reserves Summary

- 3.29 A summary breakdown of the Council's reserves is presented in the table below, showing the balance of reserves as at 31 January 2026.

Summary of General and Earmarked Reserves	
Reserve	Reserve Value
	£m
Corporate:	
General Fund	5.149
Capital Reserve	0.398
Insurance Reserve	0.849
Specific Projects:	
Adult Social Care	0.711
Fleet Replacement	0.454
Highways Feasibility Costs	0.102
Local Development Framework	0.540
Community & Environment	0.542
Mersey Valley Golf Club	0.480
Mersey Gateway	33.542
CCLA Property Fund	0.263
Various Other	0.161
Grants:	
Building Schools for the Future	6.529
Public Health	1.147
Supporting Families Performance Payments	0.204
Children's & Education	1.256
Domestic Abuse	0.915
Enterprise & Employment	0.725
Food Waste Collection	0.237
Mersey Gateway Environmental Trust	0.492
Various Other	0.154
Total Earmarked Reserves	54.850

- 3.30 The above table shows the diminishing level of reserves available to assist with funding any future budget overspends and balancing future budgets. Only the £5.149m of the General Fund could now be used for these purposes, as all remaining reserves are committed for specific purposes.

Capital Spending

3.31 Council approved the 2025/26 Capital Programme on 5 March 2025. Since then the capital programme has been revised to reflect a number of changes in spending profiles and funding as schemes have developed. Appendix 5 brings all the separate elements together and report on the Council's total planned capital programme expenditure. The schemes which have been revised within the programme are as follows:

- a) Stair Lifts
- b) Joint Funding RSL Adaptations
- c) Stadium Minor Works
- d) Halton Leisure Centre
- e) Children's Playground Equipment
- f) Pickerings Pasture Café
- g) Homeless Accommodation Refurbishment
- h) Equality Act Improvement Works
- i) Foundry Lane Residential Area
- j) Town Deal
- k) Pride in Place
- l) Mersey Gateway Crossings Board
- m) HR Unit 4 Implementation

3.32 Capital spending at 31 January 2026 totalled £37.802m, which represents 70% of the total Capital Programme of £54.320m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years).

3.33 Capital receipts available to fund the programme are expected to be fully exhausted by the end of the financial year. If planned use of capital receipts remains on track, there may be a shortfall in receipts of £0.651 which will require funding from the revenue budget. Provision has therefore been included within Corporate and Democracy to cover the possibility of this happening.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 As at 31 January 2026, net revenue spend is forecast to be £1.273m under the approved budget. This represents positive progress across all Departments compared to forecasts from earlier in the year. However, it remains essential that all Departments continue to identify spending reductions and ensure that all agreed budget savings are fully implemented.

4.2 Departments should ensure that all spending continues to be limited to what is absolutely essential throughout the remainder of the year, to maximise the forecast outturn underspend in order to minimise the amount of EFS borrowing required and associated cost.

5.0 POLICY AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities above.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are a number of financial risks within the budget. The Council has internal controls and processes in place to ensure that spending remains in line with budget as far as possible.

7.2 A budget risk register of significant financial risks has been prepared and is included at Appendix 6.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1072

10.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act

Summary of Revenue Spending to 31 January 2026

APPENDIX 1

Directorate / Department	Annual Budget £'000	Budget To Date £'000	Actual To Date £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	January 20265 Forecast Outturn (o'spend) £'000	November 2025 Forecast Outturn (o'spend) £'000
Adult Social Care	24,559	28,282	28,936	(654)	(698)	(768)
Care Homes`	8,077	7,006	7,200	(194)	(389)	(385)
Community Care	28,404	23,570	23,932	(362)	(417)	(683)
Complex Care Pool	13,249	6,546	6,297	249	470	303
Adults Directorate	74,289	65,404	66,365	(961)	(1,034)	(1,533)
Finance	5,661	5,759	5,328	431	495	432
Legal & Democratic Services	322	132	21	111	131	102
ICT & Support Services	269	-676	-742	66	77	68
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	1,166	933	948	(15)	(17)	(108)
Chief Executives Directorate	7,418	6,148	5,555	593	686	494
Children & Families	55,906	41,396	40,444	952	1,228	(209)
Education, Inclusion & Provision	11,813	11,493	12,326	(833)	(1,105)	(1,034)
Children's Directorate	67,719	52,889	52,770	119	123	(1,243)
Community & Greenspace	23,900	18,539	18,474	65	85	88
Economy, Enterprise & Property	2,522	-148	-298	150	173	127
Planning & Transportation	9,329	5,793	4,240	1,553	1,804	1,390
Environment & Regeneration Directorate	35,751	24,184	22,416	1,768	2,062	1,605
Corporate & Democracy	-4,025	-2,481	-2,150	(331)	(635)	(635)
Public Health Directorate	1,900	-1,759	-1,807	48	71	31
Total Operational Net Spend	183,052	144,385	143,149	1,236	1,273	(1,281)

Adult Social Care

APPENDIX 2

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	18,821	15,685	14,568	1,117	1,499
Agency- Covering Vacancies	0	0	1,349	(1,349)	(1,412)
Premises	498	444	399	45	71
Supplies & Services	698	691	1,021	(330)	(380)
Aids & Adaptations	37	31	35	(4)	(5)
Transport	341	284	315	(31)	(54)
Food & Drink Provisions	228	190	117	73	91
Supported Accommodation and Services	1,408	1,174	1,017	157	209
Emergency Duty Team	157	78	70	8	(68)
Transfer To Reserves	284	7,733	7,733	0	0
Contracts & SLAs	1,043	869	880	(11)	(11)
Housing Solutions Grant Funded Schemes					
Homelessness Prevention	548	473	195	278	0
Rough Sleepers Initiative	167	139	139	0	0
Trailblazer	75	63	38	25	0
Total Expenditure	24,305	27,854	27,876	(22)	(60)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-1,044	-795	-624	(171)	(175)
Sales & Rents Income	-538	-473	-421	(52)	(62)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-2,203	-1,470	-1,035	(435)	(443)
Capital Salaries	-699	-669	-669	0	0
Housing Schemes Income	-783	-765	-765	0	0
Total Income	-5,267	-4,172	-3,514	(658)	(680)
Net Operational Expenditure	19,038	23,682	24,362	(680)	(740)
Recharges					
Premises Support	789	658	658	0	0
Transport Support	792	660	634	26	42
Central Support	4,039	3,366	3,366	0	0
Asset Rental Support	13	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-112	-84	-84	0	0
Net Total Recharges	5,521	4,600	4,574	26	42
Net Departmental Expenditure	24,559	28,282	28,936	(654)	(698)

Care Homes

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
<u>Madeline Mckenna</u>					
Employees	782	651	574	77	84
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	96	(96)	(122)
Other Premises	90	70	70	0	4
Supplies & Services	25	18	17	1	1
Food Provison	51	38	42	(4)	(2)
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-127	-106	-94	(12)	(9)
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-34	-22	-24	2	0
Total Madeline Mckenna Expenditure	787	649	681	(32)	(44)
<u>Millbrow</u>					
Employees	2,456	2,046	1,051	995	1,152
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	835	(835)	(1,048)
Other Premises	117	90	120	(30)	(33)
Supplies & Services	72	54	44	10	18
Food Provison	81	61	66	(5)	(2)
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-13	-10	0	(10)	(13)
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-690	-483	-580	97	113
Total Millbrow Expenditure	2,023	1,758	1,536	222	187
<u>St Luke's</u>					
Employees	3,811	3,137	2,232	905	1,172
Agency - covering vacancies	145	145	1,157	(1,012)	(1,272)
Other Premises	156	120	165	(45)	(48)
Supplies & Services	68	49	72	(23)	(22)
Food Provison	128	107	139	(32)	(37)
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-153	-106	-21	(85)	(76)
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-1,523	-1,114	-1,115	1	4
Total St Luke's Expenditure	2,632	2,338	2,629	(291)	(279)
<u>St Patrick's</u>					
Employees	2,112	1,760	1,051	709	772
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	828	(828)	(1,058)
Other Premises	144	111	117	(6)	(2)
Supplies & Services	67	51	57	(6)	(2)
Food Provison	127	106	98	8	10
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-99	-82	-5	(77)	(93)
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-766	-561	-554	(7)	(11)
Total St Patrick's Expenditure	1,585	1,385	1,592	(207)	(384)
<u>Care Homes Divison Management</u>					
Employees	322	269	155	114	131
Care Home Divison Management	322	269	155	114	131
Net Operational Expenditure	7,349	6,399	6,593	(194)	(389)
Recharges					
Premises Support	65	54	54	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	663	553	553	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	728	607	607	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	8,077	7,006	7,200	(194)	(389)

Community Care

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Residential & Nursing	21,981	16,611	16,752	(141)	(162)
Domiciliary Care & Supported living	16,705	13,109	13,326	(217)	(255)
Direct Payments	15,665	13,899	13,977	(78)	(95)
Day Care	712	548	519	29	52
Total Expenditure	55,063	44,167	44,574	(407)	(460)
Income					
Residential & Nursing Income	-13,081	-9,628	-9,659	31	40
Community Care Income	-3,115	-2,426	-2,301	(125)	(163)
Direct Payments Income	-1,034	-793	-921	128	166
Income from other CCGs	-477	-335	-346	11	0
Market sustainability & Improvement Grant	-2,796	-2,330	-2,330	0	0
Adult Social Care Support Grant	-6,102	-5,085	-5,085	0	0
War Pension Disregard Grant	-54	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-26,659	-20,597	-20,642	45	43
Net Operational Expenditure	28,404	23,570	23,932	(362)	(417)

Complex Care Pool

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Intermediate Care Services	6,425	4,843	4,622	221	248
Oakmeadow	2,040	1,672	1,633	39	47
Community Home Care First	1,838	1,072	241	831	1,197
Joint Equipment Store	880	734	734	0	0
Contracts & SLA's	3,330	14	14	0	0
Inglenook	137	102	80	22	27
HICafes	3,729	2,726	2,483	243	292
Carers Breaks	445	334	310	24	29
Carers centre	365	-15	-15	0	0
Residential Care	7,236	6,030	6,030	0	0
Domiciliary Care & Supported Living	4,336	3,613	3,613	0	0
Pathway 3/Discharge Access	426	347	423	(76)	(92)
HBC Contracts	72	74	87	(13)	(15)
Healthy at Home	28	-28	-28	0	0
Capacity	30	23	13	10	12
Total Expenditure	31,317	21,541	20,240	1,301	1,745
Income					
BCF	-15,032	-12,527	-12,527	0	0
CCG Contribution to Pool	-3,034	-2,466	-2,466	0	0
Oakmeadow Income	-2	-2	0	(2)	(2)
Total Income	-18,068	-14,995	-14,993	(2)	(2)
ICB Contribution Share of Surplus	0	0	650	(650)	(873)
HBC Transfer to Community Care Budget	0	0	400	(400)	(400)
Net Operational Expenditure	13,249	6,546	6,297	249	470

Finance Department

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	7,511	6,247	5,976	271	325
Insurances	1,036	914	700	214	263
Supplies & Services	1,117	709	798	(89)	(107)
Rent Allowances	31,500	21,166	21,166	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,902	1,425	1,364	61	72
LCR Levy	1,902	0	0	0	0
Bad Debt Provision	223	0	0	0	(25)
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	70	19	51	61
Discretionary Social Fund	106	88	1	87	105
Discretionary Housing Payments	279	185	185	0	0
Household Support Fund Expenditure	0	1,946	1,946	0	0
Total Expenditure	45,646	32,750	32,155	595	694
Income					
Fees & Charges	-361	-320	-401	81	98
Burdens Grant	-58	-56	-49	(7)	(9)
Dedicated schools Grant	-150	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Liability Order	-670	-616	-606	(10)	(12)
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	0
Schools SLAs	-319	-309	-308	(1)	(1)
LCR Reimbursement	-1,902	0	0	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-300	-243	-147	(96)	(115)
Rent Allowances	-30,700	-20,535	-20,171	(364)	(438)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-75	-33	(42)	(50)
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-279	-279	-279	0	0
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-453	-378	-378	0	0
Housing Benefits Award Accuracy	-4	-4	-22	18	22
Universal Credits	-5	-5	-9	4	4
Household Support Fund Grant	0	-360	-360	0	(1)
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-89	-66	-66	0	0
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-212	-208	-461	253	303
Transfer from Reserves	-27	-13	-13	0	0
Total Income	-35,756	-23,467	-23,303	(164)	(199)
Net Operational Expenditure	9,890	9,283	8,852	431	495
Recharges					
Premises Support	493	411	411	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,092	1,744	1,744	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-6,814	-5,679	-5,679	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,229	-3,524	-3,524	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	5,661	5,759	5,328	431	495

Legal Services

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	2,314	1,935	1,469	466	559
Agency Related Expenditure	0	0	212	(212)	(258)
Supplies & Services	181	169	146	23	28
Civic Catering & Functions	21	16	12	4	5
Legal Expenses	418	167	267	(100)	(120)
Transport Related Expenditure	8	5	5	0	0
Other Expenditure	0	0	2	(2)	(2)
Total Expenditure	2,942	2,292	2,113	179	212
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-75	-57	-29	(28)	(34)
School SLA's	-100	-96	-77	(19)	(23)
Licence Income	-307	-227	-206	(21)	(24)
Total Income	-482	-380	-312	(68)	(81)
Net Operational Expenditure	2,460	1,912	1,801	111	131
Recharges					
Premises Support	62	52	52	0	0
Transport Recharges	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support Recharges	275	230	230	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Support Recharge Income	-2,475	-2,062	-2,062	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,138	-1,780	-1,780	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	322	132	21	111	131

ICT & Support Services Department

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,899	4,867	4,673	194	232
Supplies & Services	1,070	931	849	82	99
Capital Finance	496	410	368	42	50
Computer Repairs & Software	1,717	1,453	1,514	(61)	(73)
Communication Costs	138	89	106	(17)	(21)
Premises	139	107	97	10	13
Transport	3	2	1	1	1
Other	4	0	4	(4)	(5)
Total Expenditure	9,466	7,859	7,612	247	296
Income					
Fees & Charges	-849	-269	-300	31	37
Schools SLA Income	-659	-614	-394	(220)	(264)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-9	9	9
Total Income	-1,508	-883	-703	(180)	(218)
Net Operational Expenditure	7,958	6,976	6,909	67	78
Recharges					
Premises Support	373	311	311	0	0
Transport	22	18	19	(1)	(1)
Central Support	1,391	1,160	1,160	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-10,969	-9,141	-9,141	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-7,689	-7,652	-7,651	(1)	(1)
Net Departmental Expenditure	269	-676	-742	66	77

Chief Executives Delivery Unit

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	3,578	2,971	2,888	83	99
Employees Training	99	82	65	17	21
Apprenticeship Levy	330	275	324	(49)	(58)
Supplies & Services	412	417	473	(56)	(67)
Agency	3	3	3	0	0
Total Expenditure	4,422	3,748	3,753	-5	-5
Income					
Fees & Charges	-241	-179	-237	58	69
Schools SLA Income	-580	-563	-495	(68)	(81)
Total Income	-821	-742	-732	(10)	(12)
Net Operational Expenditure	3,601	3,006	3,021	(15)	(17)
Recharges					
Premises Support	157	131	131	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,008	840	840	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-3,653	-3,044	-3,044	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,435	-2,073	-2,073	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,166	933	948	(15)	(17)

Children & Families

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	21,212	17,258	16,566	692	1,047
Premises	392	295	284	11	13
Supplies & Services	1,941	1,884	2,099	(215)	(250)
Transport	367	266	209	57	67
Direct Payments	1,220	966	899	67	72
Commissioned services to Vol Orgs	328	221	158	63	80
Residential Care	27,751	21,861	21,223	638	749
Out of Borough Adoption	97	73	5	68	92
Out of Borough Fostering	5,605	3,656	4,700	(1,044)	(1,255)
In House Adoption	557	295	287	8	10
Special Guardianship Order	2,604	1,998	1,917	81	96
In House Foster Carer Placements	2,766	2,148	1,659	489	587
Lavender House Contract Costs	279	210	206	4	4
Home Support & Respite	497	468	415	53	65
Care Leavers	434	336	330	6	8
Family Support	81	67	30	37	34
Contracted services	3	3	3	0	0
Emergency Duty	184	138	70	68	(1)
Youth Offending Services	461	353	361	(8)	(17)
Total Expenditure	66,779	52,496	51,421	1,075	1,401
Income					
Fees & Charges	-33	-37	-28	(9)	(14)
Sales Income	-1	-1	-1	0	0
Rents	-82	-50	-50	0	0
Reimbursement & other Grant Income	-512	-590	-476	(114)	(171)
Transfer from reserve	-16	-1	-1	0	12
Dedicated Schools Grant	-50	0	0	0	0
Government Grants	-14,080	-13,665	-13,665	0	0
Total Income	-14,774	-14,344	-14,221	(123)	(173)
Net Operational Expenditure	52,005	38,152	37,200	952	1,228
Recharges					
Premises Support	736	613	613	0	0
Transport	10	8	8	0	0
Central Support Recharges	3,331	2,776	2,776	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-176	-153	-153	0	0
Net Total Recharges	3,901	3,244	3,244	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	55,906	41,396	40,444	952	1,228

Education, Inclusion & Provision

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	8,728	7,046	6,751	295	235
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	191	(191)	(204)
Agency - in addition to establishment	66	50	98	(48)	6
Premises	15	12	3	9	0
Supplies & Services	3,015	2,058	2,136	(78)	(94)
Independent School Fees	12,144	11,276	11,276	0	0
Schools Contingency	430	250	250	0	0
Transport	43	33	50	(17)	(20)
Schools Transport	2,776	1,740	2,394	(654)	(784)
Early Years Payments including Pupil Premium	15,805	14,145	14,145	0	0
Commissioned Services	2,007	1,823	1,654	169	203
Inter Authority Special Needs	1,606	1,600	1,600	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	115	19	19	0	(67)
Capital Finance	4,400	3,555	3,558	(3)	(3)
Total Expenditure	51,150	43,607	44,125	(518)	(728)
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-338	-324	-369	45	54
Government Grant Income	-6,541	-5,422	-5,440	18	22
Dedicated Schools Grant	-32,335	-26,946	-26,946	0	(1)
Inter Authority Income	-446	-296	-120	(176)	(211)
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-1,767	-1,459	-1,248	(211)	(253)
Schools SLA Income	-503	-362	-344	(18)	(22)
Transfer From Reserves	-549	-110	-142	32	39
Total Income	-42,479	-34,919	-34,609	(310)	(372)
Net Operational Expenditure	8,671	8,688	9,516	(828)	(1,100)
Recharges					
Premises Support	405	338	338	0	0
Transport Support	773	845	850	(5)	(5)
Central Support	1,947	1,622	1,622	0	0
Asset Rental Support	17	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	3,142	2,805	2,810	(5)	(5)
Net Departmental Expenditure	11,813	11,493	12,326	(833)	(1,105)

Community & Greenspaces

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	15,640	12,876	12,320	556	664
Agency - Covering vacancies	20	16	16	0	0
Agency - In addition to establishment	16	16	255	(239)	(272)
Premises	3,304	2,439	2,463	(24)	(29)
Supplies & Services	3,706	2,921	3,168	(247)	(297)
Transport	117	104	127	(23)	(28)
Extended Producer Responsibility	500	86	86	0	0
Other Agency Costs	454	426	411	15	18
Other Expenditure	187	102	99	3	3
Waste Disposal Contracts	7,121	4,554	4,643	(89)	(108)
Transfers to Reserves	1,091	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	32,156	23,540	23,588	(48)	(49)
Income					
Sales Income	-1,359	-1,181	-1,160	(21)	(25)
Fees & Charges Income	-6,300	-5,487	-5,690	203	244
Rental Income	-1,118	-838	-745	(93)	(112)
Government Grant Income	-5,260	-3,010	-3,010	0	0
Reimbursement & Other Grant Income	-840	-590	-590	0	0
SLA Income	-23	0	0	0	0
Internal Fees Income	-216	-153	-288	135	161
Capital Salaries	-236	-126	-109	(17)	(21)
Transfers From Reserves	-647	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-15,999	-11,385	-11,592	207	247
Net Operational Expenditure	16,157	12,155	11,996	159	198
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,657	1,381	1,381	0	0
Transport Support	2,433	2,125	2,219	(94)	(113)
Central Support	4,297	3,581	3,581	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-843	-703	-703	0	0
Net Total Recharges	7,743	6,384	6,478	(94)	(113)
Net Departmental Expenditure	23,900	18,539	18,474	65	85

Economy, Enterprise & Property

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	4,825	4,167	3,971	196	246
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	270	(270)	(335)
Repairs & Maintenance	1,716	1,407	1,407	0	(1)
Premises	173	137	137	0	(1)
Energy & Water Costs	1,094	826	709	117	140
NNDR	672	672	678	(6)	(6)
Rents	157	118	117	1	1
Economic Regeneration Activities	3	3	1	2	2
Security	508	356	376	(20)	(24)
Supplies & Services	702	456	487	(31)	(38)
Supplies & Services - Grant	1,062	702	702	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	127	127	127	0	0
Capital Finance	17	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	1,850	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	12,906	8,971	8,982	(11)	(16)
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-586	-423	-529	106	126
Rent - Commercial Properties	-929	-733	-729	(4)	(5)
Rent - Investment Properties	-38	-34	-30	(4)	(4)
Government Grant	-3,829	-3,539	-3,539	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-190	-190	-233	43	51
Schools SLA Income	-55	-55	-55	0	0
Recharges to Capital	-474	-474	-494	20	21
Transfer from Reserves	-587	-587	-587	0	0
Total Income	-6,688	-6,035	-6,196	161	189
Net Operational Expenditure	6,218	2,936	2,786	150	173
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,738	2,282	2,282	0	0
Transport	26	21	21	0	0
Central Support	2,878	2,398	2,398	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-9,342	-7,785	-7,785	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,696	-3,084	-3,084	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,522	-148	-298	150	173

Planning & Transportation Department

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,985	4,992	4,476	516	619
Efficiency Savings	-100	-83	0	(83)	(100)
Premises	188	153	112	41	49
Hired & Contracted Services	415	148	109	39	47
Supplies & Services	168	219	390	(171)	(205)
Planning Appeal Decision	0	0	-300	300	300
Street Lighting	1,643	1,034	918	116	139
Highways Maintenance - Routine & Reactive	1,803	903	1,270	(367)	(440)
Highways Maintenance - Programmed Works	812	619	165	454	545
Fleet Transport	1,467	1,164	1,215	(51)	(61)
Bus Support - Halton Hopper Tickets	14	13	8	5	6
Bus Support	506	781	781	0	0
Agency Related Expenditure	8	10	188	(178)	(214)
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	31	31	31	0	0
NRA Levy	75	75	74	1	1
LCR Levy	1,553	1,164	1,164	0	0
Contribution to Reserves	393	34	34	0	0
Total Expenditure	14,961	11,257	10,635	622	686
Income					
Sales & Rents Income	-97	-80	-86	6	7
Planning Fees	-798	-658	-806	148	178
Building Control Fees	-251	-219	-166	(53)	(64)
Other Fees & Charges	-971	-807	-1,470	663	796
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-235	-195	-195	0	0
Government Grant Income	-57	-57	-57	0	0
Halton Hopper Income	-15	-13	-11	(2)	(2)
Recharge to Capital	-119	0	0	0	0
LCR Levy Reimbursement	-1,553	-1,164	-1,164	0	0
Contribution from Reserves	-159	-159	-159	0	0
Total Income	-4,255	-3,352	-4,114	762	915
Net Operational Expenditure	10,706	7,905	6,521	1,384	1,601
Recharges					
Premises Recharges	739	616	616	0	0
Transport Recharges	808	661	656	5	6
Central Recharges	2,505	2,090	2,090	0	0
Asset Charges	918	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-6,347	-5,479	-5,643	164	197
Net Total Recharges	-1,377	-2,112	-2,281	169	203
Net Departmental Expenditure	9,329	5,793	4,240	1,553	1,804

Corporate & Democracy

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	427	344	398	(54)	(20)
Contracted Services	12	9	37	(28)	0
Supplies & Services	102	95	-75	170	152
Premises Expenditure	24	21	20	1	0
Transport Costs	1	1	2	(1)	0
Members Allowances	994	828	878	(50)	(40)
Contingency	674	562	0	562	0
Contribution to Reserves	300	300	263	37	(277)
Debt Management Expenses	20	17	63	(46)	(19)
Precepts & Levies	244	244	244	0	0
Interest Payable - Treasury Management	2,308	1,923	1,640	283	339
Interest Payable - Other	215	179	179	0	0
Capital Financing (Minimum Revenue Provision)	3,004	2,504	2,966	(462)	38
Cost of Exceptional Financial Support					
Interest Payable	1,225	1,021	914	107	129
Capital Financing (Minimum Revenue Provision)	500	500	500	0	0
Cost of Dedicated School Grant Deficit					
Interest Payable	725	604	743	(139)	(166)
Efficiency Savings:					
Purchase of Additional Leave	-100	-83	-189	106	165
Voluntary Severance Scheme	-200	-167	0	(167)	(200)
Apprenticeship First Model	-200	-167	-22	(145)	(174)
Agency Staff Reduction	-1,700	-1,417	0	(1,417)	(1,700)
Review Existing Contracts	-200	-167	0	(167)	(200)
Debt Reduction	-100	-83	0	(83)	(100)
Sale of Land	-100	-83	0	(83)	(100)
Total Expenditure	8,175	6,985	8,561	(1,576)	(2,173)
Income					
Interest Receivable - Treasury Management	-3,045	-2,537	-3,819	1,282	1,481
Interest Receivable - Other	-19	-16	-16	0	57
Other Fees & Charges	-146	-119	-82	(37)	0
Grants & Reimbursements	-334	-278	-278	0	0
Government Grant Income	-6,272	-5,227	-5,227	0	0
Total Income	-9,816	-8,177	-9,422	1,245	1,538
Net Operational Expenditure	-1,641	-1,192	-861	(331)	(635)
Recharges					
Premises Support	22	18	18	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	898	790	790	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-3,304	-2,097	-2,097	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,384	-1,289	-1,289	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-4,025	-2,481	-2,150	(331)	(635)

Public Health

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,212	4,166	4,158	8	9
Other Premises	6	5	0	5	6
Supplies & Services	371	269	268	1	1
Contracts	7,143	5,891	5,890	1	0
SLA's	495	100	98	2	2
Transport	4	3	3	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	800	0	0	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	20	2	2	0	0
Other Agency	24	24	24	0	0
Total Expenditure	14,075	10,460	10,443	17	18
Income					
Fees & Charges	-122	-122	-146	24	45
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-203	-203	-212	9	10
Transfer from Reserves	-428	-357	-357	0	0
Government Grant Income	-12,923	-12,794	-12,794	0	0
Total Income	-13,676	-13,476	-13,509	33	55
Net Operational Expenditure	399	-3,016	-3,066	50	73
Recharges					
Premises Support	209	174	174	0	0
Transport Support	24	20	22	(2)	(2)
Central Support	1,937	1,621	1,621	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-669	-558	-558	0	0
Net Total Recharges	1,501	1,257	1,259	(2)	(2)
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,900	-1,759	-1,807	48	71

High Needs 2025/26 Forecast Spend Position

Appendix 3

	Current Budget	Forecast 2025-26	Variance
High needs place funding - Mainstreams Units	1,431,940	2,083,288	-651,348
High needs place funding - Special	4,945,835	7,334,632	-2,388,797
High needs place funding - PRU	995,833	1,089,000	-93,167
Top-up funding - maintained Mainstream Schools	2,728,439	4,559,288	-1,830,849
Top-up funding - maintained Special	2,150,842	2,845,091	-694,249
Top-up funding - maintained PRU	1,743,236	1,739,387	3,849
Top-up funding - academies, free schools and colleges	2,028,918	3,391,870	-1,362,952
Top-up funding - academies Special	989,608	3,347,982	-2,358,374
Top-up and other funding - non-maintained and independent providers	7,272,179	11,553,719	-4,281,540
Top-up and other funding - Post-16 FE	2,796,102	2,105,491	690,611
Additional high needs targeted funding for mainstream schools and academies	0	0	0
SEN support services	2,280,293	2,233,815	46,478
Special free school	330,606	573,334	-242,728
Exclusions	0	58,540	-58,540
Support for inclusion	45,492	45,492	0
Therapies and other health related services	20,400	20,400	0
Totals	29,759,723	42,981,329	-13,221,606

Progress Against Agreed Savings

APPENDIX 4

Adult Social Care

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Housing Solutions	474	Remodel the current service based on good practice evidence from other areas.	125	0		Currently Under Review
Voluntary Sector Support	N/A	Review the support provided by Adult Social Care and all other Council Departments, to voluntary sector organisations. This would include assisting them to secure alternative funding in order to reduce their dependence upon Council funding. A target saving phased over two years has been estimated.	100	0		Achieved
Community Wardens/Telecare Service		Community Wardens/Telecare Service – a review will be undertaken of the various options available for the future delivery of these services, with support	0	280		Unlikely to be achieved – currently forecast overspend position

		from the Transformation Delivery Unit.				
Care Management Community Care Budget		Community Care – continuation of the work being undertaken to review care provided through the Community Care budget, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.	0	1,000		Unlikely to be achieved to be achieved on a longer term basis. Interim measures in place to support the current year position includes use of surplus capital grants.
Various		Review of Service Delivery Options – reviews will be undertaken of the various service delivery options available for a number of areas including; Day Services, Halton Supported Housing Network, In-House Care Homes, Reablement Service and Oak Meadow.	0	375		Unlikely to be achieved by financial year-end.
Total ASC Directorate			225	1,655		

Finance

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Internal Audit	300	Restructure in light of potential retirements over the next two years within the Internal Audit Team.	50	0		It appears unlikely that the proposed £50k budget saving will be realised this year, if at all
Council Tax	84	Increase the charges applied when a court summons is issued by 30% (£23), to achieve full cost recovery over the three year period.	40	0		Increase in costs to be considered from 2026/27, dependent on Government not fixing maximum summons charges.
Debt Management		Debt Management – undertake a review of debt management policies and procedures, in order to implement a more robust approach to debt management and debt recovery, considering options such as seeking payment in advance wherever possible, to improve cashflow and reduce the risk of non-recovery.	0	100		Currently being reviewed by the Transformation team.
Total Finance Department			90	100		

Legal and Democratic Services

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Members		Deputy Mayor – cease provision of the Deputy Mayor’s allowance, whilst retaining a nominated Deputy Mayor.	0	6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Achieved.
Total Legal and Democratic Services			0	6		

Children and Families Department

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Children's Centres	1,293	Review the operation of Windmill Hill Children's Centre, where there is the potential to save on premises and staffing costs.	22	0		With the implementation of the family hubs the review of windmill hill will no longer be viable. The centre is located in an area of deprivation and the role of the centre as a family hub is a priority in the children's social care review and supporting families at an earlier level, improving access to services for the most vulnerable and ensure a positive start for all children. These priorities fit with the council priorities
Children's Residential Care		Residential Placements – continuation of the work being undertaken to review residential placements, especially high cost placements, and identify opportunities to step-down placements or find alternatives, in	0	1,500		Residential placements were all reviewed in early 2024 with some reduction in costs established. As part of the longer term plan included in the sufficiency strategy, Halton has partnered with a not for profit organisation, Juno, who are awaiting registration from OFSTED - this approach is part of the LCR approach working with NFP organisations. In

		order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.				<p>addition significant changes have been made to reduce the numbers of children coming into care. Mocking bird constellation is in place and evidenced support has resulted in appropriate transition so the need for residential is mitigated. A property has been identified for care leavers and further properties identified for additional semi-independent provisions. Juno will focus on their second home after July.</p> <p>Whilst this saving has been achieved against residential care, costs continue to remain high in comparison with benchmarked authorities</p>
Fostering		Independent Fostering Agencies and Out of Borough Fostering – continuation of the work being undertaken to review placements, to increase use of In-Borough foster carers wherever possible and thereby reduce costs, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.	0	200	U	<p>Recruitment campaign has been launched to attract in house foster carers so Council reliance on IFA's is reduced. Unfortunately there is a national shortage of foster carers and as a result the reliance on IFA's continues at a high cost to the authority.</p>
Legal Costs		Court Costs – implementation of measures in conjunction with Legal Services, to reduce the backlog and ongoing number of	0	200	U	<p>Progress has been made on reducing the cost of court with success in reducing the number of applications, the reduction in timeliness of</p>

		Children's cases going to court, thereby reducing the timescales involved and cost of court proceedings, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.				proceedings, further work is currently underway to reduce the number of C2 applications to court. PLO process is proving effective for some families in diverting away from legal proceedings and safely maintaining children with parents, further exploration is taking place on the use of in house psychologists to undertake assessments in the court arena to further reduce court costs
Total Children & Families Department			22	1,900		

Education, Inclusion and Provision Department

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Home to School Transport		Home to School Transport – undertake consultation with stakeholders and partners with regard to implementing a new Home to School and College Travel and Transport Policy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.	0	300		The consultation with stakeholders and partners has taken place. The results have been analysed and recommendations put to Executive Board for possible policy changes which will not be implemented until Autumn 2026
Total EIP Department			0	300		

Community and Greenspaces Department

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
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 them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.	12	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	School meals service has ceased and is reflected in the 25/26 budget.
Green Waste		Green Waste – increase green waste charges from £43 to £50 per annum, to bring Halton onto a comparable basis with charges levied by neighbouring councils.	0	100	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Green waste charges have been increased to £50.
Area Forums		Area Forums – cease the funding for Area Forums.	0	170	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Area forum budgets have been removed in 25-26

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Total Community & Greenspace Dept			12	270		

Economy, Enterprise and Property Department

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Asset Management		Accelerate the lease or sale of surplus land, non-operational buildings, surplus space within building, etc. to either generate lease rentals or capital receipts to help fund capital schemes and thereby reduce future capital financing costs.	0	100		It is not expected this saving will materialise in the current year.
Total EEP Dept			0	100		

Policy, Planning and Transportation Department

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
Highways		LED Advertising Screens – install LED advertising screens at appropriate locations within the Borough in order to generate advertising revenue. The estimated annual income is the Council's share of advertising revenue net of capital financing costs for the installations.	0	100		It is not anticipated that this income will be achieved this financial year as the LED screens are no closer to being installed.
Total PPT Dept			0	100		

Public Health Directorate Department

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
Environmental Health		Pest Control – increase charges for pest control on the basis of benchmarking data, to bring Halton onto a comparable basis with charges levied by neighbouring councils.	0	45	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Charges Increased
Total Public Health Directorate			0	45		

Corporate and Democracy

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
Chief Executives Delivery Unit		Purchase of Additional Leave – development of a voluntary scheme to enable staff to purchase additional annual leave.	0	100		Scheme has been agreed and implemented. Prudent forecast of saving against the scheme is estimated to be in the region of £0.265m
Chief Executives Delivery Unit		Voluntary Severance Scheme – development of a policy whereby staff may be offered voluntary severance in appropriate circumstances, but without creating a significant pension strain liability.	0	200		Scheme to be designed and approved. Uncertainty to timing and sign-up to the scheme. Unlikely to be in place for this financial year.
Chief Executives Delivery Unit		Apprenticeships - implement an “Apprentice First” policy, with all appropriate vacant posts assessed initially to determine whether they might be suitable as an apprenticeship. This will build longer term resilience into the organisation’s workforce and provide short term cost savings by drawing down funding from the apprenticeship levy. The scheme will be co-ordinated by the newly appointed Apprenticeship Officer, funded and supported by the TDU.	0	200		Scheme being developed, uncertainty to take up of the scheme. It is currently forecasts savings of £0.026m will be achieved by financial year-end.

Council Wide		Agency Staff Reduction – continuation of the work being co-ordinated by the Transformation Delivery Unit to reduce the reliance upon agency workers across the Council, in particular within Adults and Children’s Social Care. Target net savings of £1.7m for 2025/26, £1.3m for 2026/27 and £1.1m for 2027/28.	0	1,700		There is evidence of reduced agency usage within the Children’s directorate but targets have been built into directorate budget which duplicate what is included here. Uncertainty with regard to reductions across Adult Social Care. Highly unlikely the £1.7m saving will be achieved in the current financial year.
Council Wide		Debt Management – undertake a review of debt management policies and procedures, in order to implement a more robust approach to debt management and debt recovery, considering options such as seeking payment in advance wherever possible, to improve cashflow and reduce the risk of non-recovery.	0	100		Review of debt management particularly with Adult Social Care has commenced.
Council Wide		Review all existing contracts across the Council to re-consider their requirements and performance on the basis of outputs achieved.	0	200		Currently part of workstream being undertaken by the Transformation Programme.
Total Corporate & Democracy			0	2,500		

Symbol

Objective



Indicates that the objective is on course to be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.



Indicates that it is uncertain or too early to say at this stage whether the milestone/objective will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.



Indicates that it is highly likely or certain that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.

2025/26 Capital Programme as at 31 January 2026

APPENDIX 5

Scheme Detail	2025/26 Original Allocation £000	2025/26 Revised Allocation £000	Cumulative Spend to 31 Jan 2026 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026 £000	Allocation remaining £000	2026/27 Forecast Allocation £000
Childrens Directorate						
Capital Repairs	882.1	882.1	738.6	754.0	128.1	0.0
Asbestos Management	10.0	10.0	1.2	10.0	0.0	0.0
Schools Access Initiative	37.7	44.0	43.3	44.0	0.0	0.0
Basic Need Projects	600.8	600.8	1.3	100.0	500.8	0.0
Small Capital Works	173.0	173.0	109.0	170.0	3.0	0.0
SEND capital allocation	1,871.2	1,871.2	353.0	1,275.0	596.2	45.0
SEND capital unallocated	1,775.5	1,775.5	0.0	0.0	1,775.5	0.0
SCA unallocated	129.3	123.0	0.0	0.0	123.0	0.0
Family Hubs & Start for Life	63.0	63.0	22.7	63.0	0.0	65.0
Childcare Expansion	314.8	314.8	95.3	314.8	0.0	0.0
AMP Data	25.0	25.0	22.8	25.0	0.0	0.0
Childrens Directorate Total	5,882.4	5,882.4	1,387.2	2,755.8	3,126.6	110.0

2025/26 Capital Programme as at 31 January 2026 continued

Scheme Detail	2025/26 Original Allocation £000	2025/26 Revised Allocation £000	Cumulative Spend to 31 Jan 2026 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026 £000	Allocation remaining £000	2026/27 Forecast Allocation £000
Adults Directorate						
Grants - Disabled Facilities	2,200.0	2,000.0	1,130.4	2,000.0	0.0	700.0
Stair Lifts	400.0	550.0	427.2	550.0	0.0	700.0
Joint Funding RSL Adaptations	300.0	300.0	260.8	300.0	0.0	300.0
Madeline McKenna Residential Home	300.0	200.0	46.6	100.0	100.0	0.0
Millbrow Care Home	200.0	200.0	64.5	100.0	100.0	0.0
St Lukes	50.0	200.0	131.4	200.0	0.0	0.0
St Patricks	200.0	200.0	105.2	150.0	50.0	0.0
Care Home Refurbishment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Telehealthcare Digital Switchover	135.0	135.0	61.9	135.0	0.0	0.0
Oakmeadow and Peelhouse Network Improvements	40.0	40.0	0.0	40.0	0.0	0.0
Crow Wood Lane Specialist Housing	250.0	250.0	250.0	250.0	0.0	0.0
Adults Directorate Total	4,075.0	4,075.0	2,478.0	3,825.0	250.0	1,700.0
Public Health & Public Protection Directorate						
New database for Public Protection Regulatory Services	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	200.0
Public Health & Public Protection Directorate Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	200.0

2025/26 Capital Programme as at 31 January 2026 continued

Scheme Detail	2025/26 Original Allocation £000	2025/26 Revised Allocation £000	Cumulative Spend to 31 Jan 2026 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026 £000	Allocation remaining £000	2026/27 Forecast Allocation £000
Environment & Regeneration Directorate						
Stadium Minor Works	22.1	49.6	49.6	49.6	0.0	16.1
Halton Leisure Centre	99.7	217.4	217.4	217.4	0.0	0.0
Children's Playground Equipment	67.8	81.6	81.6	81.6	0.0	51.2
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Upton Improvements	13.0	13.0	0.0	13.0	0.0	0.0
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12.0	12.0	0.0	12.0	0.0	0.0
Open Spaces Schemes	600.0	770.0	677.5	770.0	0.0	600.0
Runcorn Town Park	450.6	450.6	63.4	125.0	325.6	280.0
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,841.6	250.0	179.4	250.0	0.0	1,591.6
Pickerings Pasture Cafe	469.2	520.0	511.0	520.0	0.0	0.0
Cemetery Infrastructure work	469.1	469.1	123.4	410.0	59.1	683.0
Stadium Public Address System	810.0	346.0	34.9	346.0	0.0	379.0
Stadium Pitch Replacement	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	546.0
Litter Bins	20.0	20.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	20.0
Replacement Cremator	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
Stadium Steelwork Repairs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	600.0
Brindley Lighting	0.0	200.0	0.0	200.0	0.0	
Homeless Accommodation Refurbishment	0.0	139.1	62.8	76.3	62.8	860.9
CCTV Infrastructure Works	0.0	105.0	1.2	105.0	0.0	395.0
Equality Act Improvement Works	303.5	153.5	26.5	50.0	103.5	300.0
Foundary Lane Residential Area	3,520.9	4,000.0	3,998.8	4,000.0	0.0	0.0

2025/26 Capital Programme as at 31 January 2026 continued

Scheme Detail	2025/26 Original Allocation £000	2025/26 Revised Allocation £000	Cumulative Spend to 31 Jan 2026 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026 £000	Allocation remaining £000	2026/27 Forecast Allocation £000
Environment & Regeneration Directorate continued						
Property Improvements	231.1	231.1	151.4	231.1	0.0	200.0
Town Deal	21,823.1	13,360.2	7,954.2	13,360.2	0.0	8,612.9
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	101.2	101.2	0.0	0.0	101.2	0.0
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	82.0	82.0	10.9	82.0	0.0	0.0
Changing Places	17.0	17.0	0.0	17.0	0.0	0.0
Kingsway Centre Demolition	708.0	708.0	439.0	538.0	170.0	0.0
Port of Weston	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sci-tech Daresbury Project Violet	2,200.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2,200.0
Astmoor Masterplan	81.6	902.6	902.6	902.6	0.0	0.0
Sci-tech Daresbury - CPO	3,000.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3,000.0
Warm Homes Plan	0.0	587.6	0.0	587.6	0.0	587.6
Runcorn Town Centre Management	0.0	822.0	537.7	822.0	0.0	0.0
Widnes Town Centre Framework	0.0	200.0	67.4	200.0	0.0	0.0
Pride in Place	0.0	750.0	0.0	750.0	0.0	750.0
Bridge and Highway Maintenance	839.2	839.2	181.2	181.2	658.0	0.0
Runcorn Busway	90.0	90.0	36.0	50.0	40.0	0.0
ATF3 Murdishaw to Whitehouse	757.0	757.0	679.0	800.0	-43.0	0.0
ATF4 - Widnes Town Centre Accessibility	114.5	114.5	0.0	0.0	114.5	0.0
A56 Reconstruction	943.7	943.7	100.0	120.0	823.7	0.0
LCWIP phase 2 Daresbury	3,862	100	31.0	31.0	69.0	0.0
Pot Hole Funding	968	968	326.0	500.0	468.4	0.0

2025/26 Capital Programme as at 31 January 2026 continued

Scheme Detail	2025/26 Original Allocation £000	2025/26 Revised Allocation £000	Cumulative Spend to 31 Jan 2026 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026 £000	Allocation remaining £000	2026/27 Forecast Allocation £000
Environment & Regeneration Directorate continued						
CRSTS	4,405	4,405	3,387.0	4,405.0	0.0	1,331.0
Street Lighting - Structural Maintenance	1,025.1	1,025.1	0.0	0.0	1,025.1	1,025.1
Street Lighting - Upgrades	728.4	728.4	0.0	0.0	728.4	528.4
East Runcorn Connectivity	5,851.7	14,442.2	8,156.0	8,500.0	5,942.2	0.0
Risk Management	712.9	120.0	120.0	120.0	0.0	120.0
Widnes Loops	0.0	0.0	65.1	65.1	-65.1	0.0
Fleet Replacements	4,482.0	2,500.0	1,199.0	2,500.0	0.0	4,482.0
Early Land Acquisition Mersey Gateway	210.0	80.0	49.6	80.0	0.0	80.0
Mersey Gateway Crossings Board	60.0	-224.4	-224.4	-224.4	0.0	60.0
Environment & Regeneration Directorate Total	62,333.3	52,447.7	30,196.3	41,864.3	10,583.3	29,319.7

2025/26 Capital Programme as at 31 January 2026 continued

Scheme Detail	2025/26 Original Allocation £000	2025/26 Revised Allocation £000	Cumulative Spend to 31 Jan 2026 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026 £000	Allocation remaining £000	2026/27 Forecast Allocation £000
Chief Executives Directorate						
IT Rolling Programme	805.6	1,305.6	1,239.5	1,332.4	-26.8	1,200.0
Halton Smart Microgrid	10,870.0	1,000.0	0.0	1,000.0	0.0	9,870.0
Transformation Programme	1,538.0	2,465.7	1,878.3	2,229.7	236.0	0.0
Accelerated Growth	0.0	650.7	550.1	647.2	3.5	0.0
HR Unit 4 Implementation	0.0	72.4	72.4	72.4	0.0	384.1
Chief Executives Directorate Total	13,213.6	5,494.4	3,740.3	5,281.7	212.7	11,454.1
Total Capital Programme	85,504.4	67,899.5	37,801.8	53,726.8	14,172.7	42,783.8

2025/26 Budget Risk Register as at 31 January 2026

Appendix 6

Risk No	Risk Identified	Impact	Likelihood	Risk Score	Risk Control Measures	Assessment of Residual Risk with Control Measures Implemented			Responsible Person	Timescale for Review	Progress Comments	Date Updated
						Impact	Likelihood	Risk Score				
1	<p>Pay costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay award • Staff Turnover Saving Target • Agency, casuals and overtime • National Living Wage • Pension Costs 	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget based upon individual staff members/vacancies • Budget monitoring • Contingency • Balances • Medium Term Forecast • Engage with Cheshire Pension Scheme and pension actuary • Market supplement paid in multiple service areas • Employer of Choice Initiative • Connect to Halton – Review of Scheme 	3	3	9	ED/SB/Directors	Monthly	<p>2025/26 budget includes pay growth at forecast 2% pay award. Pay offer agreed at 3.2%, backdated pay actioned in August 2025. Actual cost of the pay award higher at £1.214m that then £1m figure previously estimated.</p> <p>Agency costs and usage remain high although clear evidence of reduction in numbers.</p> <p>Market Supplements being paid across increasing</p>	31/01/26

											number of services. Connect to Halton scheme went live September 2024, agency and casual appointments to be covered by the scheme.	
2	Redundancy and Early Retirements	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits Tracking Process • Future savings to take into account cost of redundancy and early retirements. • Seek Government approval to use capital receipts to fund transformation costs. • Develop policy for voluntary severance scheme 	2	3	6	ED/SB	Quarterly	<p>Tracker created to monitor redundancy costs in current year.</p> <p>Look to capitalise redundancy costs where possible where evidence exists it creates a longer term saving.</p> <p>£0.200m saving included in 25/26 budget for savings from voluntary severance scheme. Scheme will not go live in current financial year.</p>	31/01/26

3	Savings not achieved	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget monitoring • Contingency • Rigorous process in approving savings. • Review of savings at departmental and directorate level • Monthly budget monitoring • Medium Term Financial Forecast • RAG monitoring of savings included in bi-monthly monitoring reports. • Transformation saving targets reported monthly through Transformation Programme Board. 	4	3	12	RR/ED/SB/Directors	Monthly	<p>Savings for 2025/26 have been written into Directorate budgets.</p> <p>Budget savings monitored closely and if necessary offsetting savings sought.</p> <p>Transformation Programme Board meet on monthly basis to discuss progress against programme.</p>	31/01/26
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4	Price inflation	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prudent budget provision • Latest forecast information used eg. utilities • Budget monitoring • Contingency • Balances • CPI/RPI monitoring • MTFS 	3	3	9	ED/SB	Monthly	<p>CPI for December 2025 is 3.4% and RPI is 4.2%. Both running higher than inflation included in 2025.26 budget.</p> <p>Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecast inflation is to drop to 2.5% in 2026 and then hit the Government target of 2% in 2027.</p>	31/01/26
5	Review of LG Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business rates retention – 100% Pilot and Review • Fair Funding Review • National Public Spending Plans • Social Care Green Paper 	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPs • SIGOMA / LG Futures • Liverpool City Region & Merseyside Treasurers Group • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Member of business rate retention pilot region • Dialogue with DCLG 	4	4	9	ED/SB/NS/M W/MG	Weekly/ Monthly	<p>Business rate retention 100% scheme to continue over three year period 2026/27 to 2028/29.</p> <p>Final Local Government Finance Settlement issued 09 February 2026. Halton has been allocated an additional £11.9m of</p>	31/01/26

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to reviews and consultations 						<p>Government Grant over the next three years in comparison to what was reported as at the time of the provisional settlement.</p> <p>Core Spending Power increase for 2026/27 will be 5.5% followed by 3.4% and 3.3% in the following two years.</p>	
6	Treasury Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Borrowing Investment 	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treasury Management Strategy Link Asset Services advice Treasury Management planning and monitoring Attendance at Networking and Benchmarking Groups Officer and Member Training 	1	3	3	ED/SB/MG	Daily / Quarterly	<p>BoE base rate held at 3.75%.</p> <p>Impact of Exceptional Financial Support request to be assessed with regards to timing of future borrowing.</p>	31/01/26

7	Demand led budgets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in Care • Out of borough fostering • Community Care • High Needs 	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget monitoring • Contingency • Balances • Review service demand • Directorate recovery groups • Monthly budget monitoring • Children Improvement Plan Investment Funding 	4	4	16	ED/SB/NS/M W	Monthly	<p>Numbers of children in care and with protection plans reviewed on a weekly basis.</p> <p>Community care costs and numbers on increase, reviewed on a regular basis.</p> <p>Investment in Children Services following OFSTED inspection to be monitored with regard to control and reduction of future costs.</p>	31/01/26
8	Mersey Gateway Costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs • Toll Income • Funding • Accounting treatment 	4	2	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monitoring with Crossing Board • Capital reserve • Government Grant • Liquidity Fund 	2	1	2	ED/SB/MG	Quarterly	<p>Arrangements in place to monitor spend and availability of liquidity fund.</p>	31/01/26

9	Council Tax Collection	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council tax monitoring on monthly basis • Review of Collection Rate • Collection Fund Balance • Provision for bad debts • Review recovery procedures • Benchmarking 	3	2	6	ED/PG/SB/P D/BH/MG	Monthly	<p>Council tax collection rate through to the end of January 2026 is 88.86% which is 0.15% lower than the collection rate at the same point last year.</p> <p>Debt relating to previous years continues to be collected, and the Council utilises powers through charging orders and attachment to earnings/benefits to secure debts. £2.347m has so far been collected this year in relation to previous years' debt.</p>	31/01/26
10	Business Rates Retention Scheme	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and monitoring of latest business rates income to baseline and estimate for year. 	3	1	3	ED/SB/LB/M G	Monthly	<p>Business rate collection through to the end of January 2026 is 91.71% which is 0.99% lower than the collection rate at</p>	31/01/26

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prudent allowance for losses in collection • Prudent provision set aside for losses from valuation appeals • Regular monitoring of annual yield and baseline / budget position • Benchmarking Groups • Review recovery procedures 						<p>the same point last year.</p> <p>£1.060m has so far been collected this year in relation to previous years' debt.</p>	
11	<p>Income recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty to economy following cost of living and high inflation 	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate charging policy • Budget monitoring • Contingency • Balances • Income benchmarking 	3	1	3	ED/MM/SB	Monthly	<p>Income shortfalls identified and cause of increased concern in certain areas are being closely monitored.</p> <p>Additional posts created within Adult Social Care Directorate, responsible for improving the overall collection of social care debt.</p>	31/01/26

12	Capital Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs • Funding • Key Major Projects • Clawback of Grant • Availability and timing of capital receipts • Cashflow • Contractors 	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management • Regular monitoring • Detailed financial analysis of new schemes to ensure they are affordable • Targets monitored to minimise clawback of grant. • Contractor due diligence • Dialogue with Government departments. 	3	2	6	Project Managers/ED /SB/LH	Quarterly	<p>Capital receipts have been over committed therefore new capital schemes need to bring own funding.</p> <p>Funding set aside within Corporate and Democracy in event capital receipts fail to cover 25.26 commitments.</p>	31/01/26
13	Academy Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of transfer upon Council budget • Loss of income to Council Services 	2	4	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early identification of school decisions • DfE Regulations • Prudent consideration of financial transactions to facilitate transfer • Services continue to be offered to academies • Transfer Protocol 	1	3	3	ED/SB/NS	Monthly	<p>Consideration given in MTFS for loss of funding.</p>	31/01/26

14	Reserves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diminishing reserves, used to balance budget, fund overspend positions. 	3	4	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitored on a bi-monthly basis, reported to Management Team and Exec Board Benchmarking Financial Forecast Programme to replenish reserves. 	3	3	9	ED/SB	Quarterly	<p>Monitored and reported on a regular basis. Council reserves at historic low levels.</p> <p>Reserves will need to be replenished within future budgets</p>	31/01/26
15	Budget Balancing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council has struggled to achieve a balanced budget position for a number of years. Forecast for current year is an overspend position of £19m. Reserves insufficient to balance current year budget. Council has been given approval in-principle for Exceptional Financial Support (day to day costs funded through capital borrowings) 	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current year budgets monitored on a regular basis. Forward forecasting through to March 2029 reported on a prudent basis. Regular conversations with DHLUC re Council's financial position. LGA to undertake a financial assurance review. Transformation programme in place. Financial Recovery Plan required to better 	4	4	16	ED/SB	Ongoing	<p>Council has received in-principle agreement to fund day to day costs through Exceptional Financial Support.</p> <p>EFS covers a total of £52.8m over two years, split: 24/25 - £20.8m 25/26 - £32.0m</p> <p>Council utilised £10m of EFS in 24/25, below the approved amount.</p>	31/01/26

	for 2024/25 and 2025/26.				inform how the Council will achieve future sustainable budgets.						Financial recovery plan to be put in place to limit Council exposure to EFS and repayment of borrowings to date.	
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REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	12 March 2026
REPORTING OFFICER:	Director of Finance
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Services
SUBJECT:	Review of Councilwide Fees and Charges - Markets
WARDS:	Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 A report was presented to Executive Board on 12 February 2026 proposing councilwide fees and charges for 2026/27. At that time the proposed charges relating to the Markets were not available, details of which are now included in the Appendix.

RECOMMENDATION: That the proposed fees and charges for 2026/27 as set out in the Appendix, be approved.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 A review of councilwide fees and charges has been carried out as part of the budget preparations for 2026/27.
- 3.2 The general aim in setting fees and charges is to ensure the full recovery of costs incurred in providing a service. Establishing the cost base for providing a service draws upon the past year and forecast increases for next year. However, this has become more difficult given the impact of inflation uncertainty, wage increases and the unpredictable nature of utility costs.
- 3.3 Recovering the full cost of services throughout the year is also dependent on a number of other factors outside the agreed charge, including:
- Demand – this will change year on year and could be determined by a number of drivers such as weather, economy, regional and national events, demographics etc. Demand had further been complicated over the last three years due to the impact of Covid and increases in the cost of living.
 - Competition – there are a number of services the Council provides, for which there is a strong competitive market. Costs within the private sector are generally lower than in the public sector, for example employee terms and conditions.
 - Statutory Elements – some charges are outside the control of the Council with there being no discretion as to what can be charged.
- 3.4 Fees and charges budgeted income targets for the new financial year, have been set by the inflation level highlighted in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, at an increase of 3% on 2025/26 budgeted targets.

- 3.5 As part of the in-year budget monitoring process, actual income from fees and charges is regularly reviewed against budgeted income. Supporting narrative will be provided within monitoring reports to highlight areas where the Council has not fully recovered the cost of providing a service.
- 3.6 When the previous report was presented to the Board on 12 February 2026 setting out the councilwide review of fees and charges, the proposed charges relating to the Markets were not available, details of which are now included in the Appendix.
- 3.7 All proposed charges are exclusive of VAT. Where applicable, VAT will be added to the charges set out in the Appendix.
- 3.8 The schedule in the Appendix includes guidance on the charge being a discretionary or statutory fee. Statutory fees may result in changes throughout the year and therefore the relevant fees will be amended accordingly.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The effects of the proposed changes to fees and charges have been incorporated where possible into budgets for 2026/27. As per the Medium Term Financial Strategy budgeted income for 2026/27 has been increased by 3%, except where additional increases have been proposed as saving items, statutory fee increases apply, or where income targets have been reduced to reflect the actual recovery rate. Individual fees and charges have been reviewed and increases proposed by service managers which also reflect the particular circumstances of each area.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The financial implications are as presented in the report and appendix.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**
- 6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**
- 6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**
- 6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**
- 6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**
- 6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget supports the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities above.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 In order to avoid the risk of fees and charges not being paid and debt accruing, wherever possible fees and charges should be received before the service is provided.
- 7.2 The Council's budget assumes an increase in fees and charges income in line with those proposed in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. If increases are not approved it may lead to a shortfall in budgeted income targets.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising as a result of the proposed action.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None

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

- 10.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

MARKETS

	2025/26	2026/27	Statutory/Discretionary Charge (S/D)
Indoor Stalls Monthly Rent	Various fees	As per 2025/26 with 3% uplift	D
Storage Rent	Various fees	As per 2025/26 with 3% uplift	D
Outdoor Casual (Monday)	17.00	17.50	D
Outdoor Flea & Collectables	20.00	20.00	D
Outdoor Thursday (Casual)	15.00	15.50	D
Outdoor Friday (Casual)	23.00	23.75	D
Outdoor Casual (Saturday)	26.00	26.75	D
Full Outdoor Market Hire – Sunday	0.00	1240.00	D
Indoor Pop-up	25.00	25.00	D
Trader Promotions	10.00	10.00	D

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	12 th March 2026
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director – Children’s Services
PORTFOLIO:	Children and Young People
SUBJECT:	High Needs Provision Capital Allocation – Proposed Expansion of Special Educational Needs & Disability Provision
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The Council has previously received High Needs Provision Capital Allocation funding from the Department for Education to expand its Special Educational Needs and Disability provision in Halton.
- 1.2 In March 2025 the Council received notification from the Department for Education that it would be allocated a further circa £1.2M in High Needs Provision capital funding to support the provision of new places and/or to expand existing provision for pupils and students with high needs at LA maintained and academy schools.
- 1.3 This report seeks the Board’s approval for the proposals made with regard to the continued expansion of special educational needs and disability provision in Halton’s schools.

2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That**

- 1) the Board approves the commencement of the statutory consultation process for those schools where the Local Authority is designated as the “Decision Maker” (detailed in Appendix A), with regard to the implementation of new SEND provision;
- 2) the Board approves the progression of projects and capital expenditure for any school (LA maintained or academy) where a statutory consultation is not required (detailed in Appendix A);
- 3) the Board approves the allocation of funding for capital expenditure incurred at those academy schools detailed in Appendix A providing those schools undertake their own statutory consultation if required, and

4) The Board receives a further report detailing the outcome of any Local Authority led statutory consultations (providing the Board agree at this meeting to commence with those consultations).

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In March 2025 the Council received notification from the Department for Education that it would be allocated a further circa £1.2M of capital funding (High Needs Provision Capital Allocation) to support the provision of new places or to expand existing provision for pupils and students with high needs.
- 3.2 In the autumn term 2025, officers wrote to all schools to seek expressions of interest from them in offering new or additional SEND provision at their school, based against the required need as set out in the most recent SEND Sufficiency Strategy.
- 3.3 Eighteen Expressions of Interest from schools were received, fourteen were identified for progression as detailed in Appendix A, as those Expressions of Interest met the priority needs identified within the SEND Sufficiency Strategy.
- 3.4 Table 1 in Appendix A details the Expressions of Interest proposed for progression and indicates whether a statutory consultation is/is not required, and also indicates the responsible body required to lead the consultation i.e. the LA for maintained schools or academy trust for academy schools. A statutory consultation is required where a school has no existing SEND Resource Base or SEND Unit, or where there is existing SEND provision, but the Expression of Interest submitted by the school is for a different category of SEND provision than the school currently has.
- 3.5 Table 2 in Appendix A is for information only and details the Expressions of Interest received which will be funded from the balance remaining from previous High Needs Provision Capital allocations up to 2024/25 – this spend has previously been approved by the Executive Board on the 12th December 2024.
- 3.6 This report seeks the Executive Board's approval to commence a statutory consultation process for those schools that the Local Authority is responsible for (identified within Table 1 in Appendix A) and to approve capital spend for academy schools (subject to statutory consultation if required).
- 3.7 Based upon the Fourteen expressions of interest proposed to be taken forward, this would provide up to a further 178 additional SEND places within Halton at our existing mainstream schools, thereby supporting the Council's Inclusion Agenda. Officers have undertaken visits to those schools to establish their requirements in terms of capital investment with a view to progressing to feasibility stage with those proposals.

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

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

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

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

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

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

5.2 Should the initial overall value of the projects proposed exceed the amount of capital funding available, then the projects will be value engineered to be met within budget. This has already been discussed with those schools who have submitted an expression of interest.

5.3 By investing in additional SEND provision in-borough, either through expansion of existing provision, or through completely new provision at existing schools, the Council will reduce its High Needs expenditure, which is currently funded through the High Needs

block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, a significant amount of which is currently spent on out of borough provision. It is important that preventative action is taken now to help reduce financial costs to the Council in the future, and by retaining Halton resident pupils at local provision, this will help drive down placement and travel costs for the Council longer term.

- 5.4 Circa £1.2M has been set aside for the capital works as proposed in Appendix A table 1, but these costs are subject to feasibility studies and procurement processes and will be value engineered in agreement with schools to meet the capital funding available. It is intended that these projects will be phased in terms of opening based on the capital work required, with the intention that some could open in September 2026, and the remainder by September 2027.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

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

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy NA

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

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

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need NA

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

Where new lighting is required, LED panels will be installed which will contribute to Halton's Carbon Management Programme by helping to produce more energy efficient buildings.

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

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community NA

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 The demand for specialist support for children and young people with SEND is increasing, and places are currently limited within the

borough. By expanding existing provision, and creating additional places, children can receive the support they need within the borough and help to reduce expenditure within the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

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

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The High Needs Provision Capital Allocation provides capital funding to deliver new places, supporting learning in both mainstream and special provision and allows Halton resident pupils to be educated in-borough where possible. All schools have duties under the Equality Act 2010 towards individual disabled children and young people, as set out in the Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

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

10.0 **REASON(S) FOR DECISION**

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

10.2 To deliver and implement the capital programme.

11.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

11.1 None.

12.0 **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

12.1 It is intended that the first phase of additional provision could be offered from September 2026 and the remainder by September 2027.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
High Needs Provision Allocation 2021-26 Department for Education	Children's Services Directorate	Catriona Gallimore
Special educational needs and disability code of practice 2015	Children's Services Directorate	Martin West

Table 1: Expressions of Interest proposed for progression (and indication as to whether a statutory consultation is/is not required, together with identification of responsible body)

School	Designation	Provision Offer	Statutory Consultation Required/Responsible Body
Fairfield Primary Email sent	Primary	EYFS / Key Stage 1 /Key Stage 2 Speech Language communication and interaction/ Cognition and Learning Up to 16 places in total	Yes statutory consultation required – as new provision LA required to lead statutory consultation
Gorsewood Primary	Primary	EYFS / Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Speech Language and Communication Up to 16 places in total	Yes statutory consultation required – as new provision LA required to lead statutory consultation
Hale CE Primary Email sent	Primary	EYFS / Key Stage 1/KS2 Speech language and communication Up to 8 places in total	Yes statutory consultation required – as new provision LA required to lead statutory consultation
St Michael with St Thomas CE Primary School	Primary	EYFS / Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Speech Language communication and interaction/ Cognition and Learning 14 places in total	Yes statutory consultation required Academy Trust required to lead the consultation
Saints Peter and Paul Catholic High School	Secondary	Key Stage 3 & 4 Speech Language Communication and Interaction/ Cognition and Learning Up to 12 places in total	Yes statutory consultation required – as new provision/designation LA required to lead statutory consultation
Wade Deacon High School	Secondary	Key Stage 3 & 4 Speech Language Communication and Interaction/ Cognition and Learning Up to 16 places	Yes statutory consultation required as new provision Academy Trust required to lead the consultation
Weston Point Primary Academy	Primary	Key Stage 1 Speech Language and Communication need and Social Emotional Mental Health Up to 10 places in total	No statutory consultation required as this is an expansion of existing provision
Windmill Hill Primary	Primary	Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Communication Need and Interaction	Yes statutory consultation required – as new provision

		Up to 10 places in total	LA required to lead statutory consultation
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Table 2: For information only - Expressions of Interest to proceed - funded by previously approved HNPCA Funding

School	Designation	Provision Offer	Statutory Consultation Required/Responsible Body
Blessed Carlos Acutis Academy Email sent	Secondary	Key Stage 3 & Key Stage 4 Speech Language Communication and Interaction/ Cognition and Learning Up to 16 places in total	Yes statutory consultation required as new provision Academy Trust required to lead statutory consultation
Brookfields School	Special	Further expansion of places at Hallwood Park Primary site via final phase of capital works Up to 20 places in total	No statutory consultation required as this is an expansion of existing provision
Chesnut Lodge School	Special	Feasibility and suitability works to confirm the number of additional places that could be created on site	NA
The Grange School	Secondary	Key Stage 3 Speech Language Communication and Interaction/ Cognition and Learning Up to 16 places in total	Yes statutory consultation required as new provision Academy Trust to lead the consultation
The Heath School	Secondary	Key Stage 3 & 4 Autistic Spectrum Condition Up to 16 places in total	Yes statutory consultation required as new provision Academy Trust to lead the consultation
Victoria Road Primary	Primary	Key Stage 2 Social Emotional and Mental Health 8 places in total	No statutory consultation required as this is an expansion of existing provision

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	12 th March 2026
REPORTING OFFICER:	Zoe Fearon, Executive Director of Children's Services
PORTFOLIO:	Children, Young People & Families
SUBJECT:	Fostering and Special Guardianship Carers Uplift Payment
WARD(S)	Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report proposes an uplift of payments made to fostering and Special Guardianship Orders households in Halton to support foster carers/SGO carers/ Staying Put who are providing care and support to the children of Halton who are placed with these carers.
- 1.2 For most children who are unable to live with their birth family, a local foster placement is the best alternative, enabling them to grow up in a family environment, close to family, friends, their school, and health services that know them. The availability of local foster placements is therefore key to the ability of the council to provide sufficient placements for the looked after children for whom it is responsible.
- 1.3 As the corporate parent the council must ensure that its own internal fostering services is able to provide care for as many of these children as possible. The fostering service should provide foster carers with financial support that enables them to undertake the tasks required of them as part of a package of support that enables them to provide good quality care for the children placed with them.
- 1.4 The payment of fostering allowances is a key part of the support that the council provides to foster carers. However, it is only one aspect of the support provided: all foster carers in Halton have a supervising social worker; they are expected to attend regular training and support groups; and for several foster carers, additional support is being provided through the Mockingbird project whereby they receive peer support.
- 1.5 Our ambition is to ensure that foster carers receive a competitive allowance as part of a comprehensive support package, provided by a high performing fostering service in partnership with foster carers. The changes proposed in this report are step towards improving the allowances provided for Halton foster carers,

Currently in Halton our foster carers have not had an annual fee increase since 2023-2024 financial year, this is despite the government recommending that foster carer fees receive an annual uplift with a National Minimum Recommendation. For the year 2024-2025 this was 6.88% and for 2025-2026 this recommended amount is 3.55%.

1.6 In Halton we have continued to pay council tax payments for our foster carers and SGO carers which is an incentive not offered by all local authorities

1.7 This request is for foster carer allowances uplift and continuation of council tax and telephone allowances which are already in place.

- For all foster carers, Staying Put and SGO carers to be provided with an uplift of 2% for the 2024-2025 financial year. Payments be backdated to April 2024 to cover the costs of raising an extra child in their home.
- For the year 2025/26 for all foster carers, staying put carers and SGO carers to be uplifted by 2.5% for the financial year.
- All foster carers, SGO carers and Staying Put carers receive an uplift of 2.5% for 26/27.
- As part of our offer to recruit and maintain foster carers locally Halton Council have paid Council Tax for their carers once a child has been placed in their care. It is requested that this arrangement continues and approved Halton Foster Carers to continue to receive 100% council tax exemption at a cost of approximately £2000 per household per year. Based on 100 households this would require £200,000 per year additional funding. The current allowance is being reviewed to include stipulations on households only receiving tax relief once approved and children are in placement but where households are not taking children then council tax relief will cease.
- That the current monthly mobile phone allowance is maintained and payable to all approved Halton Fostering households. This is currently set at £15 per month.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report be noted.
2. The recommendation is that all Halton Council approved foster carers, staying put carers and SGO carers are provided with an uplift of 2% to be backdated to 1st April 2024 until 31st March 2025 and for the 2.5 % uplift to be applied from 1st April 2025 until 31st March 2026.
3. That approval is given to a further increase of 2.5% next year 26/27.

Should the recommendations be accepted there would be a cost pressure associated with the elements backdated to April.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 It is our priority to reduce the numbers of children we are caring for whilst ensuring that looked after children are in the right placement with the right support and recruiting and retaining high quality foster carers is the way we will achieve this. Consultation has taken place with our foster carers and they have recognised the financial pressures that are impacting on the council and suggested a 2% uplift across both years whilst still receiving the council tax and telephone allowances however this is not in line with the NRM and it is an ethical, strategic and financial priority for Halton Council Childrens Social Care to recruit more and retain our current cohort of foster carers and why we are suggesting a payment slightly above this level.

3.2 The council's challenge in recruiting and retaining foster carers is similar to that faced by many other councils nationally. Recruitment has declined at the same time as the number of children looked after has increased. Whilst we cannot always make a "like for like" comparison, our neighbouring authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies offer competitive packages of financial support to foster carers, which alongside the support packages help to maintain placement stability.

3.3 It is a risk that if we do not support our foster carers in line with our neighbouring local authorities, then we risk losing them. The loss of high-quality in-house carers would be financially detrimental for the council as it would leave little other alternative but to place children through higher-priced Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) or in residential homes. Placing children in external safeguarding provisions will not only be more costly for the council, but it would also take our children out of our most trusted, family and community-based environments.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Council Tax, Section 13A Discount-Policy Statement (see Appendix 1)

4.2 The Recommendation is that the policy is amended and that the following the following is inserted.

Halton Approved Foster carers may only receive Council Tax Exemption once Children are placed with foster carers. Council tax will only be paid for the period children are in placement and for a maximum of six weeks for carers who have taken a break.

The rationale for this is that this amendment is that it will save the council from paying council tax exemption from when a foster carer is approved until the point that a child is placed as this could be several months post their fostering approval.

It is also recommended that any foster carers wishing to take a break from Fostering and become unavailable to take a placement for whatever reason then the council will only pay up to six weeks council tax exemption in any calendar year ie 1st April to 31st March.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The estimated accruals that Finance financial forecast was based on 2% e have entered into Agresso for the uplift.

5.2 The cost implications for 25/26 will be an additional financial pressure on the council as forecast from finance factored in an uplift of 2% as opposed to the NRM rate of 3.55%. The figures below are an estimate completed by the finance team.

	24/25 based on 2%	25/26 Based on 2.5%	26/27 Based on 2.5%
SGO	£50,409	£61,150	£62,678
Fostering (Basic)	£38,904	£42,846	£43,918
Staying Put	£2603	£3318	£3401

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Ensuring our foster carers and SGO carers are supported in caring for our most vulnerable children will help our children to have the best start in life.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

There are no economic benefits beyond possible positive impact on economic spending due to increased allowances available for our carers the majority who live in the Halton area.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Children, young people, their carer’s and families will be able to make choices that mean they can thrive and achieve.

Children and young people will feel heard and have a positive experience of their time growing up in Halton and be supported to realise their aspirations.

Children and young people will grow in their communities in a stable and settled environment.

Young people will have positive experiences of growing up in Halton and be equipped for adult life.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

By strengthening our families and communities we will enable our cared for children to overcome their experiences of poverty, inequality and vulnerability.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

Keeping our children close and with local foster carers will have an impact as there is less transport implications in terms of family time, social work visits etc.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

N/A

7.0 Risk Analysis

7.1 The less favourable the uplift implemented increases the likelihood of complaints from foster carers which may lead to a negative impact on recruitment and retention of carers and less stability for our children in care.

7.2 Without the uplift we are failing to recognise the vital work our foster carers are doing and payments will not keep rate with the cost of living which will impact negatively on households.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

8.2 Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership,

pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

- 8.3 If the recommendations in this report are agreed, we are committing to positive outcomes for young people from across a range of protected characteristics by ensuring they have access to the best care we can offer.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Climate change can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities for children in foster care, potentially leading to increased displacement and difficulties in maintaining stable placements.

Extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and droughts can force families to relocate, disrupting their lives and the lives of children in care. Additionally, climate change impacts can strain local resources, making it harder to find suitable foster homes and support services, ultimately leading to more children being placed far from their local area and family.

- **Strain on Resources:** -Climate change can exacerbate existing challenges in finding suitable foster homes, as resources are stretched by increased demand and the need to accommodate those affected by climate-related events.
- **Distance from Home and Family:** -A lack of suitable placements in their local area can lead to children being placed far from their families, friends, and schools.
- **Challenges for Foster Carers:**-Carers may face increased challenges in supporting children's needs, especially if they are not familiar with the child's background or have difficulty accessing local services.

Addressing the Issue:

- **Prioritize Local Placements:** -Local authorities should prioritize finding suitable foster homes within the child's local area to maintain connections with family and community.
- **Recruit and Retain Foster Carers:** -Efforts should be made to recruit and retain more foster carers, particularly those with experience working with children who have experienced trauma.
- **Strengthen Local Support Services:** -Ensuring access to essential services like healthcare, education, and social support is crucial for the well-being of children in care.
- **Raise Awareness:** -Educating the public about the impact of climate change on children in care can help build support for policies and programs that protect their well-being.

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

Council Tax, Section 13A Discount-Policy Statement

[Help and support for foster parents in England: Help with the cost of fostering - GOV.UK](#)

REPORT TO: Management Team

DATE: 17th February 2026

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Environment and Urban Renewal

SUBJECT: North Widnes (East – West) Active Travel Link

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 A waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 iv of part 3 of Procurement Standing Orders is sought, for the direct award of design work for active travel links (routes 40 and 36 on Map 1 below - Lunts Heath Road, Derby Road, and Cronton etc to Flinders Chase Consultants to the value of c.£120k. Flinders Chase have already undertaken design and consultation work within Widnes and therefore have collated a significant amount of data and are familiar with the issues and opportunities in this locality for active travel.



Map 1 – North Widnes Active Travel Routes

- 2.0 RECOMMENDATION:** That a waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 iv of part 3 of Procurement Standing Orders is sought, for the direct award of design work for active travel links to Flinders Chase Consultants to undertake design work for a scheme of active travel links along Routes 36 & 40 (Lunts Heath Road, Derby Road, and Cronton Lane).

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Halton's Local Cycling and Walking Local Plan (LCWIP)
Halton's sets out the network of cycling and walking investment in the

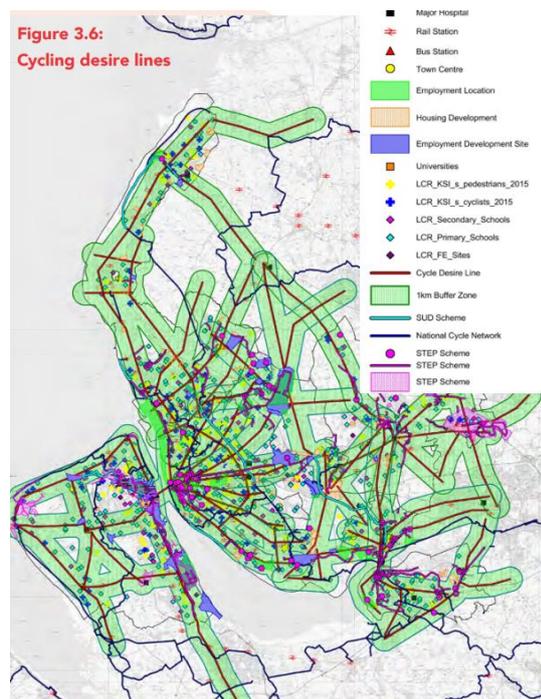
borough. This scheme was identified within that strategy to enable the delivery of sustainable routes connecting communities with education, health and employment opportunities.

- 3.2 The Lunts Heath Road, Derby Road, Cronton Lane (Route 36 & 40) scheme will connect the new housing developments along Lunts Heath Road with educational hubs (Cronton College) and train stations (Widnes), and connectivity into the wider LCWIP network.
- 3.3 The design works to be commissioned need to be consistent with previous design work completed, to ensure this scheme connects into another Flinders Chase designed scheme at Wilmere Lane. These schemes were highlighted in the Executive Board Transport Update July 2023.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Liverpool City Region Local Cycling and Walking Local Plan

Halton's Local Cycling and Walking Local Plan (LCWIP) provides for an interconnected network of active travel routes linking into neighbouring boroughs (St Helens and Knowsley) and their respective active travel networks, as identified in the Liverpool City Region LCWIP.



Overview of LCR LCWIP Network [LCR-LCWIP-Final.pdf](#)

- 4.2 Flinders Chase have previously undertaken design and consultation work for the Wilmere Lane and Birchfield Road active travel link (Route 37 on Map 1) which has been completed to detailed design stage. This route links from the St Helens borough boundary at Wilmere Lane through to Birchfield Road (Route 37), terminating at the Derby Road junction. As an update on Route 37, this scheme is fully designed and has been through public

consultation. The Wilmere Lane scheme has undergone consultation with the public and Ward Members. ([Active Travel Consultation | HBC active consultation tool](#)). Route 37 is due to go to a consultation review panel (comprising chair / vice chair of EUR PPB, ward councillors, and portfolio holder) for additional scrutiny of the consultation responses and design work. The final scheme will then be presented to the Executive Board for consideration.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Funding for scheme design will come from planning obligations (Section 106) collected from the new housing development in North Widnes.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The north Widnes (East – West) active travel links will feed into a larger network of measures to encourage walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport linking Halton with neighbouring boroughs and linking routes to colleges, schools and leisure. The route will encourage exercise and reduction in car journeys improving carbon emissions and air quality.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Attractive safe links to employment, leisure, education and retail facilities.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The design of active travel routes is to cater for all ages and encourage safe inclusive routes for all abilities. Providing safe easy to negotiate routes for young cyclists and families with pushing prams.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The route will be designed to cater for the most vulnerable with a route that is inclusive for all including wheelchair users and those with visual impairment.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

The scheme is to provide a full alternative route in North Widnes for walking, wheeling and cycling to encourage alternative travel and reliance on the car.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The design will be visually attractive and will upgrade the existing infrastructure. The route links communities i.e. Cronton College and local schools.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 The risk of not undertaking this work means that the North Widnes (East – West Link) would be delayed, with the Council still required to deliver the requisite Section 106 obligations.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no direct equality or diversity issues raised in this report as it is a request for a procurement waiver.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The scheme will have a beneficial effect on carbon reduction by encouraging alternative forms of transport other than the car, encouraging modal shift.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
LCWIP (Halton)	Municipal Building, Widnes	Jonathan Farmer
Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP) 2022	Municipal Building, Widnes	Rebecca Taylor

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	12th March 2026
REPORTING OFFICER:	Director of Public Health
PORTFOLIO:	Housing and Environmental Sustainability
SUBJECT:	Private rented sector – proposal to introduce selective licensing in 6 areas
WARD(S)	Central and Westbank Appleton Mersey and Weston Bridgewater Highfield Halton Lea

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Executive Board Approval to commence the statutory consultation process on the proposal to introduce selective licensing of private rental properties in 6 areas of the borough.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) **The Board approve commencement of the statutory consultation on the proposal to introduce a selective licensing scheme for private rental properties in the borough.**
- 2) **The Board delegate authority to determine appropriate license conditions to the Director of Public Health and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Sustainability.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 On March 9th 2026 The Safer and Housing Policy and Performance endorsed the proposal to introduce a selective licensing scheme in Halton and to seek Executive board approval to commence the statutory consultation. Any feedback from the PPB will be reported at the executive board meeting. The background to the development of the policy and the statutory requirements that must be considered are set out below.
- 3.1 In September 2022 the Environment & Urban Renewal PPB resolved to form a working party of members to consider policy to address the proliferation and standards of Houses in Multiple Occupation. This followed concerns raised by elected members about anti social behaviour and property standards.

- 3.2 An outcome of the working party was a borough wide study, produced by Metastreet an external housing consultancy, to provide a detailed understanding of the condition and impacts of the boroughs entire private sector housing stock including HMO's.
- 3.3 In September 2024 the Environment & Urban Renewal PPB received a report setting out the outcomes of the working party including the findings of stock condition and impacts study. The report identified that 3 wards, Central & West Bank, Mersey & Weston and Appleton had a higher than average percentage of private rental properties. The report also identified a higher incidence of property related complaints and predicted property hazards in those wards. The report recommended that future interventions to improve property standards were focussed on those wards. Members endorsed the proposal that further interventions to improve standards in the Private Rental Sector were taken forward and considered during the development of the borough wide housing strategy.
- 3.4 In December 2025 the Council adopted the Housing Strategy. During the development of this strategy the council commissioned a further study from Arc 4 to assess the evidence to support selective licensing in certain areas as a means to address member concerns around property standards and anti social behaviour.
- 3.5 Under the Housing Act 2004 a local housing authority can designate all or part of its area as subject to selective licensing. Within that area all private rental properties must be licensed by the local authority. There are a limited number of exemptions including larger HMO properties that are already subject to mandatory licensing.
- 3.6 The purpose of selective licensing is address specific problems defined within the Act. These problems are;
 - Low Housing Demand
 - Anti- social behaviour
 - Poor housing conditions
 - High levels of migration
 - High Level of deprivation
 - High level of crime
- 3.7 In December 2024 the government introduced a new general approval removing the need for local authorities to seek approval from the Secretary of State for licensing schemes of any size. Previously schemes including more than 20% of the council's housing stock required government approval.
- 3.8 However all selective licensing schemes must still comply with the statutory requirements set out in the Housing Act. Designations relating to Housing Conditions, Deprivation, Migration and Crime may only be considered in areas with a high proportion of housing in the private rental sector. This is currently set at 19%.

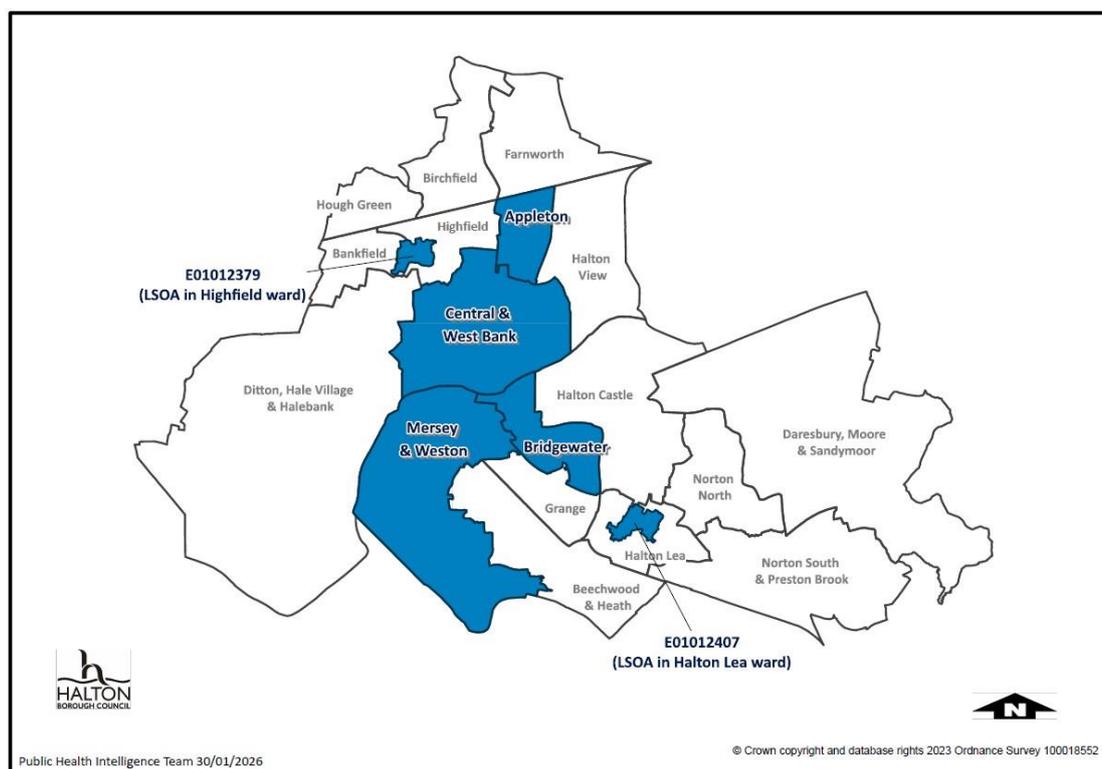
- 3.9 The local authority must consult stakeholders including tenants, landlords and agents for a period of at least 10 weeks and consider the responses to this consultation in any final scheme.
- 3.10 The review of evidence undertaken by Arc 4 identified 4 wards with a high percentage of private rental property (over 19%) These wards also ranked highest when assessed against 18 indicators for poor property conditions, including predicted hazards, property age (pre 1919 and pre 1944) and Energy efficiency.
- 3.11 Although the other wards in Halton have lower levels of private rental property there are some further geographical areas within these wards with levels of private rental property above 19%. These areas include 2 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) within Halton Lea and Highfield wards. These 2 LSOA's with high levels of private rental properties also rank highest of all LSOA's in the borough for the 18 indicators of poor property conditions.
- 3.12 Lower Super Output Areas are small geographical areas which were created by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and are mainly used for census purposes. They enable statistical comparisons of geographical areas of similar population sizes.
- 3.13 A selective licensing scheme in these 4 wards and 2 LSOA's would seek to ensure that property conditions in the private rental sector are improved and maintained and comply with all housing standards requirements.
- 3.13 Central & Westbank, Appleton and Mersey & Weston wards and the 2 LSOA's in Highfield and Halton Lea wards are also amongst the boroughs most deprived wards and LSOA's. Deprivation significantly affects health inequalities with individuals in deprived areas experiencing worse health outcomes and a higher prevalence of chronic health conditions than those in least deprived areas. A selective licensing scheme in those 5 areas would therefore seek to reduce the risk of housing being a source of health inequalities.
- 3.14 Whilst there is some evidence of higher ASB and Crime rates in Central and Westbank, Appleton and Mersey & Weston the evidence is not conclusive that ASB and Crime is related directly to private rental property in those areas. The town centres of Runcorn and Widnes are within those wards and this will account for some of the ASB and crime figures. It was also noted that ASB rates are higher in wards with lower levels of private rental property.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Based on the evidence available it is proposed to introduce a selective licensing scheme in 4 wards and 2 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in the borough. Table 1 below specifies the areas proposed, the number of properties implicated and the objective for the selective licensing scheme. The map below highlights the areas to be included.

Table 1 Scheme numbers of objectives

Area	Total Properties	Total PRS	PRS%	Scheme objective
Central & West Bank ward	3060	660	22%	Property conditions Deprivation
Appleton Ward	3063	798	26%	Property conditions Deprivation
Mersey & Weston Ward	3803	1054	28%	Property conditions Deprivation
Bridgwater Ward	3439	796	23%	Property conditions
LSOA E01012379 (Highfield)	769	177	23%	Property conditions Deprivation
LSOA E01012407 (Halton Lea)	892	228	26%	Property conditions Deprivation

Map 1 Proposed selective licensing areas.

- 4.2 There is insufficient evidence at this stage to support the introduction of a scheme to address crime and anti social behaviour in any of the councils wards. This will be kept under review.
- 4.3 The introduction of a selective licensing scheme will enable the council to proactively check private rental properties to ensure they reach the required standard, particularly in areas with the oldest housing stock. The current

system relies on tenants reporting disrepair to the council. Whilst the Renters Rights Act 2025 provides some improved tenancy protections for tenants, which will come into force in May 2026, further measures to improve property standards such as a decent homes standard are not due to come into force until 2035.

- 4.4 It is estimated there are 3,713 private rental households within the 6 areas proposed. Based on 2021 census data there are 8,019 private rental households in the borough. Therefore the proposed scheme includes 38% of the boroughs private rental households. As set out in section 3.7 the council no longer requires permission from the Secretary of State to introduce a scheme of this scale in the proposed areas.
- 4.5 Councils can charge a fee for the license which can be used to fund the scheme. Licenses remain valid for a 5 year period. It is proposed to offer a discount for properties with high energy efficiency ratings, and landlord who support the council meeting it homelessness duties.
- 4.6 Licenses will specify a number of conditions that license holders must comply with to ensure the scheme fulfils its objectives. These conditions will be set out in the consultation document. The Board are requested to delegate the power to determine appropriate conditions to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Housing and Environmental Sustainability.
- 4.7 The introduction of selective licensing is a highly specialist areas of housing law. In the interests of continuity and expediency It is proposed that Arc 4 who supported the council with the production of the housing strategy and undertook the work to establish the evidence base for selective licensing be commissioned to draw up a detailed consultation document and support the consultation process. This work will be commissioned in accordance with the council's procurement protocols.
- 4.8 Following consultation the decision to implement a selective licensing scheme must be made by full council.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Additional staffing resources will be required to deliver the scheme i.e. to administer licenses, deal with complaints and referrals, inspect properties and take appropriate enforcement action. The council can charge fees for selective licenses. These fees should be used to fund the costs associated with the selective scheme. A license fee of around £550 is proposed. Licenses last for a period of 5 years. Based on the number of properties subject to the scheme total gross income from fees over the 5 year period is projected to be around £2m. This will therefore provide £400,000 income per annum over the 5 year term of the licenses. This income will cover the annual cost of running the scheme. The scheme will therefore be cost neutral and will not require additional revenue funding.

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

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The proposed scheme aims to improve and maintain standards in the private rental sector to ensure housing provides a safe and healthy living environment for residents.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

None

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The proposed scheme aims to improve and maintain standards in the private rental sector to ensure housing provides a safe and healthy living environment for residents.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The scheme is intended to prevent housing from being a source of health inequalities by improving and maintaining the standard of private rental housing in the boroughs most deprived areas.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

Ensuring that properties meet the required minimum energy efficiency rating helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the cost of heating homes.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

Improving standards in the private rental sector will contribute to safer and more attractive neighbourhoods and have a wider benefit to community safety and wellbeing.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The council will need to fully consider the consultation responses from stakeholder groups to ensure any concerns raised by these parties are addressed. The Renters Rights Act 2025 prevents landlords from increasing rents above market rates which will help prevent the cost of the license fees being passed on to tenants. In any case the cost of the license fee equates to just over £100 per year and is set to recover the cost of running the scheme.

- 7.2 Proposals in the Renters Rights Bill to introduce a decent homes standard for the private rental sector will not come into force until 2035. This scheme will enable the Council to proactively ensure that housing conditions in the private rental sector are maintained and improved, particularly in areas with the boroughs oldest housing stock. The scheme will be self financing with the costs covered by licenses fees.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 The scheme is intended to prevent housing conditions from being a source of health inequalities and is targeted at areas of high deprivation.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The scheme will enable the council to proactively ensure that private rental properties in the license scheme area meet the required energy efficiency standards.

10.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

- 10.1 The scheme is required to ensure property standards in the private rental sector are improved and maintained to provide safe and healthy homes for residents. The scheme also seeks to prevent housing conditions being a source of health inequalities.

11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 11.1 The current regulatory regime for housing standards is reactive and relies on tenants reporting concerns about housing standards to the council. The Governments Renters Rights bill and the subsequent Renters Rights Act 2025 provide some measures to improve tenants rights, such as the removal of no fault evictions, however the onus is still on tenants to report concerns about property conditions. The government have recently published an implementation timetable for other measures within the renters rights bill and have indicated that measures to improve property conditions through a decent homes standards will not come into force until 2035 at the earliest. Selective Licensing is therefore the only option available to the council to proactively ensure that private rental property meets the required standards.

12 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Pending approval by council it is proposed to introduce the selective licensing scheme in April 2027.

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

‘None under the meaning of the Act.’

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	12 th March 2026
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director Environment and Regeneration
SUBJECT:	Developing a Biodiversity Net Gain Programme for Halton
PORTFOLIO(S):	Environment & Urban Renewal Housing & Environmental Sustainability
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the views of Executive Board Members regarding the development of a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Programme, including the allocation of proposed sites.
- 1.2 BNG is a mandatory approach to development in England, requiring a minimum 10% increase in habitat quality or quantity compared to the state of the site before a development takes place. Developers can choose to offset this requirement by 'buying credits' on other sites. These sites may not be necessarily in the same Local Authority area.
- 1.3 The report seeks approval to appoint a BNG Responsible Body and to undertake further financial modelling work to ascertain potential income that could be generated on designated sites.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1. Approval is given to enable the sites presented in the report (Appendix 1) to be designated for biodiversity enhancement and restoration.**
- 2. Subject to further work, the Board agrees that the sites mentioned would be protected for at least 30 years, as set out in the Environment Act 2021.**
- 3. the Executive Director Environment & Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Environment and Urban Renewal and Housing and Sustainability be authorised to appoint a BNG Responsible Body in order**

to progress five pilot sites as identified in section 3.10 of the report.

4. the Executive Director Environment & Regeneration and Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Environment and Urban Renewal, Housing and Environmental Sustainability and Portfolio Holder for Resources, be authorised to undertake further exploratory work to model potential income streams and to identify up front expenditure required to achieve this.

5. Members views are sought on the financial options outlined in section 5.5.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Halton Borough Council has a duty to support biodiversity within the Environment Act 2021 to;

- Plan what can be done to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Develop policies and specific objectives based on your considerations made within the planning stage.
- Action to deliver your policies and achieve your objectives.

3.2 Progress on Biodiversity Net Gain contributing to improved greenspaces also has formed part of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

3.3 This report advises Members on how HBC will meet these requirements, through the allocation of parcels of land for ecological conservation and enhancement. These sites will be known as Biodiversity Enhancement Areas (BEAS).

The allocation of these sites is needed to assist with the national targets set out by the government to:

By 2030:

- halt the decline in species abundance.
- protect 30% of UK land.

By 2042, the government has committed to:

- increase species abundance by at least 10% from 2030, surpassing previous levels.
- restore or create at least 500,000 hectares of a range of species rich habitats.
- reduce the risk of species extinction.
- restore 75% of the one million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition, securing their wildlife value for the long term.

3.4 **Providing a Full Range of Ecosystem Services**

Greenspace, such as parks, woodland, fields and allotments as well as natural elements including green walls, roofs and incidental vegetation, are increasingly being recognised as an important asset for supporting health and wellbeing. Green spaces are said to provide the full range of ecosystem services:

- They offer provisioning opportunities for physical goods that people can harvest from the environment such as food, wood and fibre, water and fuel.
- Provide regulating services that occur in the ecosystem that lead to benefits such as climate stabilisation, flood management, and water filtration.
- Cultural benefits through recreational and education as well as improving mental health and building spiritual connections.
- They provide a wider support network. Ecosystems could not function without supporting services, such as the nutrient cycle, soil formation and habitat provision for biodiversity.

3.5 **Protecting Wildlife**

Effectively managed protected areas are a critical tool for safeguarding biodiversity, maintaining ecosystem equilibrium, preserving irreplaceable habitats, building resilience to climate change, providing global food security, maintaining water quality, conserving natural resources, driving economic success, curbing the spread of diseases and pests, and providing many other benefits to wildlife and human health.

3.6 Designating these sites for protection and enhancement, will allow the Environment Services team to put in place a plan for protection of flora and fauna across the borough. Each site will have a specific management plan which states exactly what wildlife conservation will take place. The details within these documents will match targets set out by national strategies as well as recommendations within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Merseyside and Cheshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

3.7 **Potential Financial Benefits**

The sites outlined in this report will serve as the baseline for creating BNG opportunities through habitat banks. Each site will contain a certain number of 'units' depending on the habitat types are on the particular site. Units represent the ecological value of the created, enhanced or retained habitat within the bank, provided that there is measurable uplift in condition. In this way, habitat banks provide a mechanism for meeting regulatory obligations to compensate for habitat loss.

3.8 Within the bank HBC can sell off the units for a specific amount for safeguarding areas for 30 years. Sites have the potential to hold 50+ units meaning there is a potential for a significant income for

HBC. Members are requested to authorise further modelling work to better understand the opportunities for generating income.

3.9 The creation of these sites creates 'green capital' which HBC can use to limit the issues in the borough, improving health and wellbeing, managing health and social care costs, reducing health inequalities, improving social cohesion. All sites remain in council ownership.

3.10 It is proposed that, in the first instance the scheme would be piloted using 5 trial sites:

Hale Road Woodlands
Halton Moss
Clinton Woods
Murdishaw Valley
Moore Meadows

These sites were prioritised by Environmental Services after reports were commissioned on 13 potential sites during 2025.

However, to progress work on these sites, the Council would need to appoint a Responsible Body as outlined in section 4.3 below. It is anticipated that implementation would take place during summer/autumn 2026.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 These recommendations are designed to assist with meeting national targets and complying to nation legislation, there will be limited impact on the policies within HBC. It will mean that land is taken up and not designated for development but the wider benefits outlined in this report will outweigh this issue.

4.2 Public authorities that operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. These areas will help feed into local and national strategies including local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies and protected site strategies.

4.3 The introduction of a Habitat Banking system is in accordance with the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

In developing a Biodiversity Net Gain programme, Halton Borough Council would be required to appoint a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Responsible Body. This is a designated organisation that enters into legal conservation covenants and or Section 106 agreements with landowners to secure, monitor, and enforce long-

term (minimum 30-year) habitat enhancements. They ensure BNG targets are met, manage legal obligations, and submit annual returns to the Secretary of State. Members are advised that it is not possible for the Council to be a Responsible Body when managing its own sites.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Further work is required to further scope the business model. On the one hand it is acknowledged that costs will need to be identified for the 30-year delivery of each Council owned site identified for inclusion in a Habitat Bank Vehicle (HBV), this could be a list of options for each habitat type to understand the financial implications for the council. Further analysis of costs will be undertaken to determine expenditure already incurred by the authority.
- a. All set up costs
 - i. Staff (in-house/contractor model)
 - ii. Equipment
 - iii. Other capital costs
 - iv. Other costs
 - b. Maintenance costs and requirements over the 30 years
 - c. Monitoring costs as required through the guidance and legislation.
- 5.2 On the other hand, this will enable the identification of an indicative per unit cost for delivering and, therefore, selling a biodiversity unit for Halton HBV on a variety of different habitat types on a full cost recovery model. As the market for the sale of BNG units has been established a cost comparison with other suppliers could be considered to ensure that HBV BNG unit costs are competitive whilst providing opportunity for income generation.
- 5.3 With the potential for including these sites within Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) planning there is an income source for ensuring these sites are protected for the next 30 years. There will need to be a certain aspect of initial funding to ensure Environment Services can manage these areas as per the agreed management plans. This will mainly involve purchasing the correct equipment for grass cutting, tree works and monitoring. These will be one off purchases and as the finances come in from BNG these will be significantly reduced. It is anticipated this cost can be achieved within existing budgetary provision.
- 5.4 Nevertheless it is anticipated that a significant income stream will be generated. Therefore, Members are asked to consider, in principle, how the Council would best maximise this income. Options are set out below:

- 5.5
1. Use any income to reduce as, a 'one off', the Council's Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) obligations. This would support the Council's revenue budget by reducing the Council's debt.
 2. Apply a blended approach whereby some of the income could be used to partially reduce the Council's EFS allocation and the remainder of the income could be used to a) reinvest in supporting the continuing day to day maintenance of the borough's green and open spaces and or b) provide a capital investment fund to allow for the upgrade and refurbishment of the Council's 'green assets' in the longer term.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Incorporated within the management of the sites, areas can be made for public access and educational opportunities. Interaction with natural spaces offers a variety of mental, physical and social benefits for humans, ranging from stress reduction, quicker healing, and improved concentration in children. Providing these green areas would work directly towards the council priorities.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Sites can be used for green and blue finance opportunities which can be reinvested in benefits for wildlife and people.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

These recommendations will have limited impact on this priority. There is potential to use these sites for education and traditional skills.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

These recommendations will have negligible to no impact on people who are most in need.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

Having these sites will provide a wide range of ecosystem services which directly input into the green future of the borough. It will allow for not only biodiversity, social, cultural and economic improvements but can be used as a baseline for environmental improvements for years to come. There is potential for these areas to inspire local people to become more passionate about the environment around them and how they can improve their local area in the future.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

Wildlife and landscape improvements will make the local area a much nicer place to be, it will show just what can be done in urban and heavily industrial areas. Any financial gains from these sites can be directly used to improve the local areas for the community and wildlife. There is also potential to improve how the borough is widely appreciated on an ecological scale.

6.6.1 The loss of nature affects our economy, our culture and our daily life as individuals. Investing in nature, biodiversity and ecosystems, geodiversity and landscapes above and below the water will help improve the quality of these services as well as securing them for future generations.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The greatest risks regarding timescales of allocation have been mentioned above but due to government overarching policies the risk is deemed to be negligible. Due to the careful consideration of sites the risks have been reduced significantly. If HBC do not show that they are working towards the national targets there may be legislative implications but also a reputational risk to the Council if the Council does not apply actions outlined in its Climate Change Action Plan. An allocation of these sites to BEAs as proposed in this report will demonstrate that the council is committed to fulfilling its biodiversity principles.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The recommendations are deemed to have no equality or diversity issues.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There will be some impacts through any potential management practices and machinery. However, through careful planning by Environment Services these can be very minimal. The ecologists employed by HBC will also be monitoring the standard of the sites to be constantly looking for environmental improvements.

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

‘None under the meaning of the Act.’

Appendix 1
Sites for Consideration

Site Name	Habitat Type
Wigg Island	Grassland Woodland, Coastal areas
Halton Moss	Grasslands, Woodland
The Bongs	Grasslands, Woodlands, Urban Suburban
Sunnybank Park	Grasslands, Woodlands, Urban Suburban
Clincton Wood	Woodland, Wetlands
Regency Park	Woodland, Wetlands
Norton Cross	Woodland, Grassland
Eanleywood Lane	Grassland
Murdishaw Valley	Woodland, Grassland
Daresbury LWS	Woodland, Grassland, Watercourses
Daresbury Firs	Woodland, Grassland
Disused Railway Line South of Warrington Road	Urban Suburban
Dorchester Park	Woodland
Dutton Hospital Wood	Woodland
Gigg Lane	Heathland, Woodland, Bracken, Grassland
Hale Road Woodland	Woodland, Grassland
Haystack Lodge	Grassland
Keckwick Brook	Watercourse
Land North of Hallwood Park	Grassland, Woodland
Halton Moss	Woodland, Grassland, Watercourses
Moore Moss	Woodland, Grassland, Watercourses
Moore Meadows	Woodland, Grassland, Watercourses
Oxmoor	Flood Prevention/Eluviation
Pickerings Pasture	Coastal , Grassland, Woodland
Pond at Delphfield	Watercourses
Quarry Court	Grassland
Runcorn Hill	Woodland, Heathland, Grassland, Watercourse
Southern Verge Embankment	Grassland, Woodland
St Helens Canal/Sankey	Wetland and Watercourses
Stenhill Open Space	Grassland, Woodland
The Glen	Grassland, Woodland
Widnes Warth Saltmarsh	Coastal
Halebank Linear	Grassland, Watercourse, Urban Suburban
Desoto Road Trans-Pennine Trail Stretch	Urban and Suburban Open Mosaic
8384614 St Chads School Field Adjacent	Grassland
Moss Bank Linear	Grassland
Arley Drive Woods	Grassland Woodland
Cunningham Road Linear	Grassland
HBC Previous Grazing Land	Grassland

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