

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**



*Municipal Building,  
Kingsway,  
Widnes.  
WA8 7QF*

*14 October 2025*

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE HALTON  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

*You are hereby summoned to attend an Ordinary Meeting of the Halton Borough Council to be held in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall on Wednesday, 22 October 2025 commencing at 6.30 p.m. for the purpose of considering and passing such resolution(s) as may be deemed necessary or desirable in respect of the matters mentioned in the Agenda.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Roy', is positioned above the title of the signatory.

*Interim Chief Executive*

**-AGENDA-**

<b>Item No.</b>		<b>Page No.</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>COUNCIL MINUTES</b>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>	
<b>3.</b>	<b>THE MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>	
<b>4.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	
<b>5.</b>	<b>LEADER'S REPORT</b>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>URGENT DECISIONS</b>	<b>1 - 2</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD</b>	
	a) 10 July 2025	
	b) 11 September 2025	
<b>8.</b>	<b>MINUTES OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD</b>	
<b>9.</b>	<b>QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 8</b>	
<b>10.</b>	<b>MATTERS REQUIRING A DECISION OF THE COUNCIL</b>	
	a) External Auditor's Annual Report 2024/25	<b>3 - 76</b>
	Council is asked to consider the attached report.	
	1) the contents of the Auditor's Annual Report 2024/25 shown in the Appendix 2 be noted;	
	2) the three Statutory Recommendations highlighted within the Auditor's Annual Report 2024/25 be noted; and	
	3) the Council's responses to the Statutory Recommendations as detailed in Appendix 1, be approved.	
	b) 25/26 Councilwide Spending as at 31 July 2025 (Minute EXB 32 refers)	<b>77 - 142</b>

Executive Board considered the attached report.

RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) Executive Directors continue to implement the approved 2025/26 saving proposals as detailed in Appendix 3;
- 2) 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;
- 3) the 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; and
- 4) Council be asked to approve the revisions to the capital programme set-out in paragraph 3.24 and incorporated within Appendix 4.

- c) DCBL Stadium - New PAVA System and Structural Steel Maintenance Works and Pitch Replacement (Minute EXB 40 refers)

**143 - 148**

Executive Board considered the attached report.

RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) the Capital works identified in the report in sections 3.3 to 3.6 be approved;
- 2) consideration be given to the options outlined in paragraph 5.4 below regarding how the annual capital financing costs might be funded;
- 3) Council be asked to add works to the capital programme and include a financial contribution of £1.325m, subject to further work to establish detailed costs, and to proceed with an option to include the implementation of a PAVA system and undertake steel repairs to four stands only. This is to ensure the ongoing safety of the public when using the premises. A decision on options relating to the pitch to be deferred; and

4) approval of the detailed costs and the option to be undertaken, be delegated to the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Employment Learning, Skills and Community and the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety.

d) Public Surveillance Infrastructure (Minute EXB27 refers)

Executive Board considered the attached report.

RECOMMENDED: That

1) Council be asked to approve inclusion in the capital programme, a scheme of works and £500k investment to address CCTV infrastructure, software and hardware as outlined in the body of the report; and

2) authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services to prepare tender documents to procure this work.

e) Licensing Act 2003 - Statement of Licensing Policy

**149 - 190**

Council is asked to consider the attached report.

RECOMMENDED: That Council

1) adopt the Statement of Licensing Policy attached to this report to come into effect immediately following the expiry of the current policy on 6 January 2026; and

2) directs that the Director – Legal and Democratic Services publishes the Statement of Licensing Policy in accordance with section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003

f) Joint Health Scrutiny Arrangements - Cheshire & Merseyside: Stage 1 Delegation (EXB \* refers)

**191 - 194**

Executive Board considered the attached report.

RECOMMENDED: That Council

1) the report be noted; and

2) approves the proposal for Stage 1 delegation as outlined.

**11. MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARDS AND THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE BOARD**

a) Children, Young People and Families

- b) Local Economy
- c) Health and Social Care
- d) Housing and Safer
- e) Environment and Regeneration
- f) Corporate and Inclusion
- g) Audit & Governance Board

**12. COMMITTEE MINUTES**

- a) Development Management
- b) Regulatory
- c) Regulatory Sub Committee
- d) Taxi Licensing Sub Committee
- e) Appointments

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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Council
<b>DATE:</b>	22 October 2025
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Chief Executive
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Leader
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Urgent Decisions
<b>WARDS:</b>	Borough Wide

### 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To bring to the attention of Council urgent decisions taken since the last meeting of the Council.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report is noted.

### 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council's Constitution gives authority to the Chief Executive to take urgent decisions which are required before the next formal meeting of Executive Board/Council.

These must be made in consultation with the Leader of the Council where practicable, and with the Director – Finance and/or Director – Legal and Democratic Services where necessary. They must also be reported for information to the next practically available meeting of the Board.

- 3.2 More information on each can be found on the Council's website here:

<http://councillors.halton.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?bcr=1>

- 3.3 The urgent decisions taken since the last meeting of Council:

<b>Date Decision taken</b>	<b>Decision details</b>
8 August 2025	Waiver sign off for provision of a Edge of Care Clinical Psychologist and Mental Health Practitioner
28 August 2025	Hospital Discharge Proactive Approach Project

### 4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are none other than the constitutional requirement to report urgent decisions for information.

### 5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 5.1 The report is for information, and there are no risk issues arising from it.

**6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

6.1 None.

**7.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

None

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

8.1 No background papers were used in the preparation of this report. Further information on the decisions taken is available from the link in Paragraph 3.2.



**REPORT TO:** Council

**DATE:** 22 October 2025

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Director of Finance

**PORTFOLIO:** Corporate Services

**SUBJECT:** External Auditor's Annual Report 2024/25

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

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To consider the Auditor's Annual Report 2024/25 shown in Appendix 2, which will be presented by the Council's External Auditor, Grant Thornton UK LLP.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That;**

**(i) the contents of the Auditor's Annual Report 2024/25 shown in the Appendix 2 be noted;**

**(ii) the three Statutory Recommendations highlighted within the Auditor's Annual Report 2024/25 be noted;**

**(iii) the Council's responses to the Statutory Recommendations as detailed in Appendix 1, be approved.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The External Auditor is required to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Auditor's Annual Report details the Council's overall arrangements, as well as providing Key Recommendations regarding any significant weaknesses identified during the review. In addition, Improvement Recommendations are made which the Council may also decide to implement.

3.2 The External Auditor is required to report under three specific criteria, being:

- Financial Sustainability
- Governance
- Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness

3.3 The report in Appendix 2 provides details of the findings from the External Auditor's review, which were presented to the Audit and Governance Board on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

- 3.4 A number of Key Recommendations and Improvement Recommendations are shown within the report, along with management's responses to those recommendations.
- 3.5 In addition, three Statutory Recommendations have been made, which the Council is required to consider, confirm whether the recommendations are accepted, and if so how they will be addressed. The first two Statutory Recommendations continue from the 2023/24 report.
- 3.6 The Annual Auditor's Report 2024/25 will be presented to Council by the External Auditor, Grant Thornton UK LLP, as required by regulations within 30 days of issuing statutory recommendations.
- 3.7 The three Statutory Recommendations are presented in Appendix 1 along with management's responses.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The report provides an external viewpoint on the financial sustainability of the Council. As is now the case for many local authorities, there are significant financial challenges for the Council in funding future year budgets and managing spending within those budgets.
- 5.2 The report identifies a number of significant weaknesses regarding the arrangements the Council has in place to secure financial sustainability, governance, and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Recommendations are made in respect of each and management's responses to those recommendations are included within the report.

#### **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 priorities.

**7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The risks that have been considered as part of the Council having in place arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness, are detailed in the attached report.

**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 1972**

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

## Statutory Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

The Council should improve its short and medium term financial planning by;

- Ensuring that financial plans appropriately account for significant cost pressures, including developing comprehensive plans to address overspending on agency staff
- Implementing a more robust budget-setting approach, including public budget engagement
- Ensuring that risks to financial resilience are appropriately highlighted in financial plans, including the section 25 report
- Ensuring that financial plans are sufficient to bridge all forecast budget gaps and replenish reserves
- Ensuring that financial plans are linked to the Council's corporate priorities as set out in its new Corporate Plan

### Management Response:

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026-2031 has been further developed to highlight risks regarding financial resilience and reflect all significant forecast cost pressures we are aware of.

The MTFS has been extended to cover five years, to reflect the Council's challenging financial circumstances and financial risks. It highlights all key areas of financial pressure and the work being undertaken corporately and across service directorates to address these pressures.

Three scenarios have been developed in preparing the MTFS, to reflect continuation of the current position, a median scenario reducing costs to the benchmarked nearest neighbour average, and best-case scenario whereby costs are reduced sufficiently to deliver a balanced budget by 2030/31 without reliance upon EFS.

The approach to budget setting has been re-focused to make it more robust, with budget savings proposals being sought by Management Team for 2026/27 onwards to achieve the best-case scenario. These include longer-term proposals being developed via the re-shaped Transformation Programme. The proposals will be presented for consideration by the Transformation Board, Budget Working Group, Executive Board and Political Groups.

The Section 25 report within the 2026/27 Budget Report will be further enhanced to highlight current and future financial risks, the level of useable reserves, and progress with delivering the MTFS best case scenario.

When considering budget savings proposals, Members will consider the Council's priorities and particularly the impact upon social care services and thereby vulnerable residents. Further work will be undertaken to consider how the budget setting process can be closer linked to the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out within the new Corporate Plan.

Responsible Officer: Director of Finance

Due Date: 31 March 2026

## Recommendation 2

The Council should develop and implement the transformation programme at scale and pace to address the significant structural budget deficit. This should include:

- ensuring it has effective overview and control of its transformation programme which is sufficiently focused on budget savings.
- ensuring there is sufficient capacity and skills in the organisation to effectively deliver the required savings, including change management and the Project Management Office (PMO).
- ensuring the reprioritisation of the programme includes a review of both discretionary spending and the levels at which statutory services are provided and is informed by appropriate stakeholder consultation.
- improving programme management to include officer as well as member assurance boards.
- developing robust and transparent monitoring arrangements for benefits realisation and tracking savings as a whole programme.
- ensuring the programme has a risk and issues log that the PMO updates and uses regularly.

### Management Response:

The Transformation Board are reshaping the Programme to prioritise the achievement of savings for implementation as a matter of urgency. Benchmarking against comparators is being used to focus upon service areas exhibiting significant variances against comparator average spend. Viability assessments are being presented to the Board seeking approval to progress with full reviews.

The resourcing, skills and knowledge within the Transformation Delivery Unit is being considered, to enable the Programme to be driven forward at pace.

The Transformation Delivery Board (officers) and the Transformation Programme Board (Members) continue to provide governance and oversight of programme delivery, ensuring a focus upon budget reductions and directing capacity towards the generation of savings to meet the MTFS funding gaps over the forthcoming five years. Benefit tracking is being improved as part of the governance reporting regime for the Programme.

Responsible Officer: Interim Director of Transformation

Due Date: 31 March 2026

### **Recommendation 3**

Senior officers and elected members need to take effective corporate control of the issues highlighted by this report and prioritise at pace corporate effort in managing the issues identified in relation to financial sustainability and embed strengthened governance into the Council.

The Council must ensure it has capacity and capability in its management team to achieve this and address the significant weaknesses we have identified in relation to financial sustainability.

In time for budget setting 2026/27 we would expect to see a well-developed medium-term corporate savings and transformation programme to manage MTFP funding gaps and to reduce future reliance on EFS, with clear responsibilities and timescales.

#### **Management Response:**

The Interim Chief Executive's key priority is to ensure the Council's financial challenges are addressed as a matter of urgency, with full co-operation of all officers and Members. Governance arrangements will be strengthened to ensure the effective delivery of actions required to bring the Council onto a sustainable financial footing over the period of the MTFs. The senior officer leadership group is being fully engaged to implement spending constraints, changes to service delivery, use of innovation, and delivery of savings proposals.

Work is underway to develop savings proposals for 2026/27 onwards including those from the reshaped Transformation Programme, for consideration by Members, to address the funding gaps highlighted by the MTFs and eventually remove the reliance on EFS.

Responsible Officer: Interim Chief Executive

Due Date: 31 March 2026

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# Halton Borough Council

Interim Auditor's Annual Report  
Year ending 31 March 2025

18 September 2025



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The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed for the purpose of completing our work under the NAO Code and related guidance. Our audit is not designed to test all arrangements in respect of value for money. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify significant weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose all irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in arrangements that a more extensive special examination might identify. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting, on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

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# 01 Introduction and context

# Introduction

This report brings together a summary of all the work we have undertaken for Halton Borough Council during 2024/25 as the appointed external auditor. The core element of the report is the commentary on the value for money (VfM) arrangements. The responsibilities of the Council are set out in Appendix A. The Value for Money Auditor responsibilities are set out in Appendix B.

## Opinion on the financial statements

Auditors provide an opinion on the financial statements which confirms whether they:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2025 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2024/25
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

We also consider the Annual Governance Statement and undertake work relating to the Whole of Government Accounts consolidation exercise.

## Auditor's powers

Under Section 30 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the auditor of a local authority has a duty to consider whether there are any issues arising during their work that indicate possible or actual unlawful expenditure or action leading to a possible or actual loss or deficiency that should be referred to the Secretary of State. They may also issue:

- Statutory recommendations to the full Council which must be considered publicly
- A Public Interest Report (PIR).

## Value for money

Under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, we are required to be satisfied whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (referred to as Value for Money). The National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), requires us to assess arrangements under three areas:

- financial sustainability
- governance
- improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Our report is based on those matters which come to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures, which are designed for the purpose of completing our work under the NAO Code and related guidance. Our audit is not designed to test all arrangements in respect of value for money. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify significant weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose all irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in arrangements that a more extensive special examination might identify. The NAO has consulted on and updated the Code to align it to accounts backstop legislation. The new Code requires auditors to share a draft Auditor's Annual Report (AAR) with those charged with governance by a nationally set deadline each year, and for the audited body to publish the AAR thereafter. This new deadline requirement is introduced from November 2025.

# Local government – context

Local government has remained under significant pressure in 2024/25

## National

### Past



#### Funding Not Meeting Need

The sector has seen prolonged funding reductions whilst demand and demographic pressures for key statutory services has increased; and has managed a period of high inflation and economic uncertainty.



#### Workforce and Governance Challenges

Recruitment and retention challenges in many service areas have placed pressure on governance. Recent years have seen a rise in the instance of auditors issuing statutory recommendations.

## Local

Halton Borough Council (the Council) is a small unitary council with a population of 128,964. 30% of the population live in areas that are deprived. The Council operates under an Executive decision-making model, which oversees the formation of all major policies, strategies and plans and as such the Council's formal decision making and governance structure constitutes the full Council and an Executive (the Cabinet). Full Council and Cabinet are supported by overview and scrutiny committees. The Council has 54 councillors, and the Council is elected every four years. The most recent elections were in May 2024 when Labour secured a majority with 50 elected councillors.

**It is within this context that we set out our commentary on the Council's value for money arrangements in 2024/25.**

### Present



#### Financial Sustainability

Many councils continue to face significant financial challenges, including housing revenue account pressures. There are an increasing number of councils in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support from the government.



#### External Audit Backlog

Councils, their auditors and other key stakeholders continue to manage and reset the backlog of annual accounts, to provide the necessary assurance on local government finances.

### Future



#### Funding Reform

The UK government plans to reform the system of funding for local government and introduce multi-annual settlements. The state of national public finances means that overall funding pressures are likely to continue for many councils.



#### Reorganisation and Devolution

Many councils in England will be impacted by reorganisation and / or devolution, creating capacity and other challenges in meeting business as usual service delivery.

# 02 Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

We set out below the key findings from our commentary on the Council's arrangements in respect of value for money.

**We identify seven significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for Value for Money resulting in three statutory and four key recommendations.**

Our VFM work has concluded limited progress in 2024/25 on the two statutory recommendations we made in December 2024. We are actively considering the use of our additional powers if the Council does not respond at pace to address its financial sustainability. The report is interim as we have not completed our financial statements audit work, but the recommendations made in this report are final. The two statutory recommendations relate to financial sustainability and the Council's need to improve its short and medium-term financial planning and the need to develop and implement the transformation programme at scale and pace to address the significant structural deficit. One new statutory recommendation is made relating to governance relating to corporate pace and capacity to address its financial sustainability.

The four key recommendations relate to the requirement for the Council to put sufficient plans in place to address its escalating forecast Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit, while delivering the necessary improvements to its SEND services; needing to urgently update its arrangements for business continuity and disaster recovery planning; improving its performance management arrangements; and significantly improving its services for children and young people by putting in place arrangements to improve its SEND services working with health partners and by delivering the improvement plan to address the wider children's services inspection findings. **Our conclusions are summarised on the pages 8 to 11 and set out in detail on pages 17 to 40.**

**Recommendations made under section 24 schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014**

**Our Responsibilities** - As well as our responsibilities to give an opinion on the financial statements and assess the arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the Council's use of resources, we have additional powers and duties under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. These include powers to issue a public interest report, make written recommendations, apply to the Court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law, and to give electors the opportunity to raise questions about the Council's accounts and to raise objections received in relation to the accounts. We have concluded that it is appropriate for us to use our powers to make written recommendations under section 24 of the Act, due to inadequate arrangements relating to issues with financial planning and developing a robust transformation plan to support delivery of substantial savings and efficiencies. Further details are set out in the attached report.

**What does the Council need to do next?** Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 requires the following actions: the Council must consider the recommendation at a meeting held before the end of the period of one month beginning with the day on which it was sent to the Council. At that public meeting, the Council must decide whether the recommendations are to be accepted and what, if any, action to take in response to these recommendations. Schedule 7 specifies the meeting publication requirements that the Council must comply with.

# Executive Summary – our assessment of value for money arrangements

Our overall summary of our Value for Money assessment of the Council’s arrangements is set out below. Further detail can be found on the following pages.

Criteria	2023/24 Assessment of arrangements	2024/25 Risk assessment	2024/25 Assessment of arrangements
<b>Financial sustainability</b>	<b>R</b> Three significant weaknesses in arrangements resulting in two statutory recommendations and one key recommendation.	We undertook specific work to assess three risks of significant weakness, that we identified at the planning stage, in relation to financial planning, transformation and DSG.	<b>R</b> We confirmed three significant weaknesses in arrangements for financial planning, transformation and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) were identified, and statutory recommendations retained for financial planning and or transformation and a key recommendation retained for DSG.
<b>Governance</b>	<b>R</b> Two significant weaknesses in arrangements resulting in two key recommendations. Five improvement recommendations were also made.	We undertook specific work to assess two risks of significant weakness identified in relation to risk management and business continuity and disaster recovery.	<b>R</b> We confirmed a significant weaknesses in arrangements for corporate control and capacity resulting in a statutory recommendation. We reconfirmed a significant weakness for business continuity and disaster recovery and retained a key recommendation. We also make four improvement recommendations.
<b>Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness</b>	<b>R</b> Two significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and two key recommendations made. We also made an improvement recommendation.	We undertook specific work to assess two risks of significant weakness identified in relation to performance management and children’s services.	<b>R</b> We reconfirmed two significant weaknesses in arrangements and key recommendations made in relation to performance management and children’s services and one improvement recommendation made relating to contract management.

- G** No significant weaknesses or improvement recommendations.
- A** No significant weaknesses, improvement recommendation(s) made.
- R** Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendation(s) made.



# Executive Summary (1 of 3)

We set out below the key findings from our commentary on the Council's arrangements in respect of value for money.



## Financial sustainability

In our Auditor's Annual Report (AAR) 2023/24 we made a statutory recommendation that the Council should improve its short and medium-term financial planning. The 2024/25 outturn was an overspend of £16m on a net budget of £149.49m. It was funded by £6m of reserves and £10m in Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).

On 5 March 2025, full Council agreed the 2025/26 budget of £183.05m. This was a deficit budget of £29.39m funded by EFS. By May 2025, the Council forecast an overspend of £6.1m. Further EFS borrowing is expected over the next 3-4 years. We note the Council has agreed a financial recovery plan in September 2025. The Council's General Fund balance is £5.15m with no earmarked reserves available to help fund future budgets, this is just 2.8% of the 2025/26 budget. We retain this statutory recommendation on page 23.

In our AAR for 2023/24 we also made a key recommendation that the Council should put sufficient plans in place to address its forecast DSG deficit, while delivering the improvements to its special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services. Like many other councils its DSG deficit is increasing. The Council's DSG projections show the deficit will be £33.9m by 2028 and even with mitigations the deficit is expected to be £22.1m. We retain our prior year key recommendation on page 26.

In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a statutory recommendation that the Council should develop and implement the transformation programme at scale and pace to address the significant structural budget deficit. We retain our prior year statutory recommendation on page 25. The Council needs to save £72.55m over the next four years (46% of the 2024/25 net budget), after the assumed EFS use of £98m over the next four years. The 2024/25 budget included just £2.7m of savings and £4m from the Transformation Programme. The Council only saved £0.01m from the transformation programme in 2024/25 and assumed no savings from transformation in 2025/26. This is considerably below our expectations of what a Council of this scale should be achieving, based on savings performance throughout the sector. We also question the decision to pause savings while the Council put transformation arrangements in place. In May 2025, the Council had agreed savings of £7.23m for 2025/26 but only £0.43m were rated green (meaning deliverable). The budget gap for 2026/27 is £14.5m not including the structural deficit of £29.39m from 2025/26.

# Executive Summary (2 of 3)

We set out below the key findings from our commentary on the Council's arrangements in respect of value for money.



## Governance

The Council does not have sufficient corporate control and is not working at the pace needed to achieve financial sustainability and deliver budget savings from its transformation programme. This presents a significant weakness at the Council. We make a new statutory recommendation relating to governance on page 31. It is imperative that senior officers and elected members take effective corporate control of the issues highlighted by this report and prioritise corporate effort in managing the issues identified in relation to financial sustainability and embedding strengthened arrangements in the Council.

In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a key recommendation for the Council to significantly improve risk management. The Council has developed a new risk policy in 2024/25, aligned with the Government's Orange Book, which was agreed by the Executive in July 2025. We conclude the Council has progressed our recommendation and make an improvement recommendation on page 33 to embed these improvements to the Corporate Risk Register(CRR) format and to risk reporting.

The Council did not consult the public on its budget for 2025/26. We included this in the need for a more robust budget setting process in our statutory recommendation on financial planning page 23. CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) strongly encourages transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement as part of good financial management practice. We note the Leader of the Council is introducing a star chamber model for 2026/27 budget setting to improve internal budget setting and challenge which is good to see. The star chamber model is a mix of members and senior officers providing financial challenge to budget holders.

In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a key recommendation for the Council to urgently update its arrangements for business continuity and disaster recovery planning. The Council has developed joint arrangements with business continuity however a disaster recovery plan is not expected to be fully tested until September 2025. Therefore, this recommendation is retained.

In our AAR for 2023/24 we made an improvement recommendation that the Council needed to enhance its internal audit arrangements. We have identified further improvements needed to internal audit and make a revised improvement recommendation on page 34. We retain improvement recommendations for overview and scrutiny and the effectiveness of its Audit and Governance Committee. In 2023/24 we made an improvement recommendation relating to whistleblowing, the Council did update the policy and this recommendation is closed.

# Executive Summary (3 of 3)

We set out below the key findings from our commentary on the Council's arrangements in respect of value for money.



## Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a key recommendation that the Council needs to improve its performance management arrangements. We have found no evidence of a direct link between corporate and service plans or any public-facing annual report. However, there is a corporate plan for 2024/29 to build on. In 2024/25 there was no quarterly reporting aligned to corporate priorities and directorate reporting was not reported consistently each quarter. We have not seen a performance framework to join up the corporate plan with directorate and service performance or evidence of benchmarking to national or nearest neighbours in the directorate reports. In 2024/25 performance, risk and finance reporting was not integrated. We retain our key recommendation on page 38.

In our prior year AAR, we made a key recommendation for the Council to significantly improve its services for children and young people by putting in place arrangements to improve its special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services and by delivering the improvement plan to address the children's services inspection findings. In May 2024, Ofsted identified Children's Services in Halton as 'inadequate' across all areas. On 30 August 2024, the Secretary of State issued a Statutory Direction requiring urgent improvements and appointed a Children's Commissioner. The Commissioner worked closely with the Council and published a report in December 2024, with 24 recommendations for the Council and its partners to implement. Implementation of the Commissioner's recommendations is monitored by the independently chaired Children's Ofsted Improvement Board. The Department for Education (DfE) issued a revised statutory direction in February 2025. We note some progress to address these concerns but in 2025/26 actions are still being monitored by the DfE and Ofsted and we retain our key recommendation on page 39.

In July 2025, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published its assessment of Halton's adult social care and gave a good rating following the inspection in March 2025.

In our AAR for 2023/24 we made an improvement recommendation for the Council to improve its contract management arrangements. The Council has improved contract management in children's services. However, no formal contract meetings are held with Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority (MRWA) and financial performance is not discussed even informally. In 2024/25 MRWA were updating the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) with the Council to reflect the waste changes. This did not happen by November 2024 as planned and was not agreed by August 2025. The current contract does not enable Halton to fulfil its duties under the Simpler Recycling changes which came into effect from 31 March 2025. We make a revised improvement recommendation on page 40.

# Executive summary – auditor’s other responsibilities

This page summarises our opinion on the Council’s financial statements and sets out whether we have used any of the other powers available to us as the Council’s auditors.

## Auditor’s responsibility

## 2024/25 outcome

### Opinion on the Financial Statements

We have completed our audit of your financial statements and anticipate issuing an unqualified audit opinion, following the Audit & Governance Board meeting on 24 September 2025. Our findings are set out in further detail on pages 12 to 15.

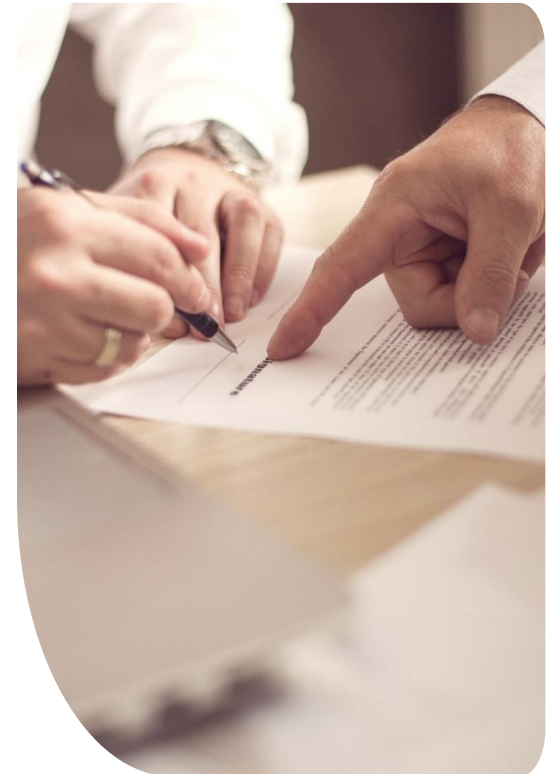
### Use of auditor’s powers

We issued a new written statutory recommendation under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and retained the two from 2023/24. We have considered the lack of progress made by the Council in 2024/25 and considered use of further powers beyond statutory recommendations. While we did not use our further powers in 2024/25, we will consider progress throughout 2025/26 and may again consider additional powers if sufficient progress is not achieved.

We did not make an application to the Court or issue any Advisory Notices under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

We did not make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

We did not identify any issues that required us to issue a Public Interest Report (PIR) under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.



# **03 Opinion on the financial statements and use of auditor's powers**

# Opinion on the financial statements

These pages set out the key findings from our audit of the Council's financial statements, and whether we have used any of the other powers available to us as the Council's auditors.

## Audit opinion on the financial statements

We anticipate issuing an unqualified audit opinion, following the full Council meeting on 22 October 2025. The full opinion is included in the Council's Annual Report for 2024/25, which can be obtained from the Council's website.

## Grant Thornton provides an independent opinion on whether the Council's financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2025 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2024/25
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

We conducted our audit in accordance with: International Standards on Auditing (UK), the Code of Audit Practice (2024) published by the National Audit Office, and applicable law. We are independent of the Council in accordance with applicable ethical requirements, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard.

## Findings from the audit of the financial statements

The Council provided draft accounts in line with the national deadline of 30 June 2025.

Draft financial statements were of a reasonable standard and supported by detailed working papers.

- We have identified 4 adjustments to the financial statements. These have no impact on the level of the Council's usable reserves.
- We have also raised recommendations for management as a result of our audit work.
- Our work remains on-going, however based on work completed to date there are no matters of which we are aware that would require modification of our audit opinion or material changes to the financial statements, subject to a small number of outstanding matters.

## Audit Findings Report

We report the detailed findings from our audit in our Audit Findings Report. A final version of our report was presented to the Council's Audit & Governance Board meeting on 24 September 2025. Requests for this Audit Findings Report should be directed to the Council.

# Other reporting requirements

## Annual Governance Statement

Under the Code of Audit Practice published by the National Audit Office we are required to consider whether the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with the requirements of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting, or is misleading or inconsistent with the information of which we are aware from our audit.

We are not required to consider whether the Annual Governance Statement addresses all risks and controls or that risks are satisfactorily addressed by internal controls.

Following receipt of the updated AGS, we have nothing to report in this regard.



# Use of auditor's powers

## We bring the following matters to your attention:

### Statutory recommendations

Under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors can make written recommendations to the audited body.

We retained two prior year statutory recommendations as part of our VFM in 2024/25 and issued a new statutory recommendation to the Council in 2024/25 relating to corporate control and pace.

### Public Interest Report

Under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors have the power to make a report if they consider a matter is sufficiently important to be brought to the attention of the audited body or the public as a matter of urgency, including matters which may already be known to the public, but where it is in the public interest for the auditor to publish their independent view.

We did not issue a report in the Public Interest with regard to arrangements at the Council for 2024/25. However, we are carefully considering the use of additional powers if the Council does not achieve corporate control over its financial sustainability at the pace we consider necessary.



# 04 Value for Money commentary on arrangements

# Value for Money – commentary on arrangements

This page explains how we undertake the value for money assessment of arrangements and provide a commentary under three specified areas.

All Councils are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness from their resources. This includes taking properly informed decisions and managing key operational and financial risks so that they can deliver their objectives and safeguard public money. Council's report on their arrangements, and the effectiveness of these arrangements as part of their annual governance statement.

Under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, we are required to be satisfied whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), requires us to assess arrangements under three areas:



## Financial sustainability

Arrangements for ensuring the Council can continue to deliver services. This includes planning resources to ensure adequate finances and maintain sustainable levels of spending over the medium term (3-5 years).



## Governance

Arrangements for ensuring that the Council makes appropriate decisions in the right way. This includes arrangements for budget setting and budget management, risk management, and making decisions based on appropriate information.



## Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Arrangements for improving the way the Council delivers its services. This includes arrangements for understanding costs and delivering efficiencies and improving outcomes for service users.

# Financial sustainability ( 1 of 8)

We considered  
how the  
Council:

Commentary on arrangements

Rating

identifies all the significant financial pressures that are relevant to its short and medium-term plans and builds these into them

In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a statutory recommendation that the Council should improve its short and medium-term financial planning

The 2024/25 outturn was an overspend of £16m on a net budget of £149.49m. It was funded by £6m of reserves and £10m in Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). MHCLG (see Appendix D) offers EFS for councils needing financial support. It is provided through capitalisation directions, which allow councils to treat revenue costs as capital—enabling them to borrow or use capital receipts to cover costs.

The additional cost of agency staff is one of the main reasons and we note agency staff covering vacancies are not budgeted for as we would expect to see. On 5 March 2025, full Council agreed the 2025/26 budget of £183.05m. This was a deficit budget of £29.39m funded by EFS. By May 2025, the Council forecast an overspend of £6.1m despite a 22% increase in its budget for 2025/26. We note that during 2024/25 the Chief Executive held budget meetings with Directors. Further EFS borrowing is expected over the next 3-4 years. The Council’s General Fund balance is £5.15m with no earmarked reserves available to help fund future budgets, this is just 2.8% of the 2025/26 budget. On 31 March 2025, the Council had £16.57m of debt owing to it, of which £12.69m related to adult social care. Given the Council's financial position, the scale of debt compared with the budget is significant. We retain this statutory recommendation on pages 22-23.

In our AAR for 2023/24 we also made a key recommendation that the Council should put sufficient plans in place to address its escalating forecast DSG deficit, while delivering the improvements to its SEND services. The Council is part of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme. The Council’s DSG projections show the deficit will be £33.9m by 2028 and even with mitigations the deficit is expected to be £22.1m. By March 2025, the DSG deficit was £14.65m, an increase of £9m since 2023/24. Given the Council's reserves of £5.15m lifting of the statutory override in March 2028 would be very serious for the Council's financial sustainability. This is a similar position for many other councils. The DSG statutory override is a temporary accounting mechanism introduced by the Government to help Councils manage DSG deficits. the Government plans to extend the override to 31 March 2028. We retain our prior year key recommendation on page 26.

R

- G** No significant weaknesses or improvement recommendations.
- A** No significant weaknesses, improvement recommendations made.
- R** Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendation(s) made.

# Financial sustainability (2 of 8)

We considered how the Council:

Commentary on arrangements

Rating

<p>plans to bridge its funding gaps and identify achievable savings</p>	<p>In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a statutory recommendation that the Council should develop and implement the transformation programme at scale and pace to address the significant structural budget deficit. We retain our prior year statutory recommendation on pages 24-25. In December 2024, the Council needed to save £69.8m over the next four years (46% of the 2024/25 net budget), after the assumed EFS use over the next four years of £98m. On 10 February 2025, the Council received a letter from the Government confirming it was minded to approve a capitalisation direction not exceeding £52.8m, of which £20.8m related to 2024/25 and £32m in 2025/26. On 21 August 2025, Government confirmed a capitalisation direction of £10m to fund the balance of the Council’s 2024/25 overspend. At period one 2025/26 the Council forecast an overspend of £6.19m, increasing the level of EFS required to £35.57m, above the approved limit.</p> <p>The 2024/25 budget included just £2.7m of savings and £4m from the Transformation Programme. The Council only saved £0.01m from the transformation programme in 2024/25 and assumed no savings from transformation in 2025/26. This is considerably below our expectations of what a council of this scale should achieve, based on performance in the sector. We also question the decision to pause savings while the Council put transformation arrangements in place. The transformation programme cost £2.41m in 2024/25 and is expected to cost £2.43m in 2025/26. In May 2025, the Council had agreed savings of £7.23m for 2025/26 but only £0.43m were rated green (meaning deliverable). The budget gap for 2026/27 is £14.5m not including the 2025/26 gap of £29.39m funded by EFS. Appropriate arrangements are not in place to identify and make savings or to report on these to elected members. In September 2025 we note the updated MTFP to 2030/31 shows a medium-term gap of £118.6m and that the Executive will be discussing a financial recovery plan to reduce this gap. We will consider this as part of our 2025/26 assessment of your VFM arrangements.</p>	<p>R</p>
<p>plans finances to support the sustainable delivery of services in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities</p>	<p>In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a statutory recommendation that the Council should improve its short and medium-term financial planning. The Council has not made a coherent link between its priorities and the 2025/26 budget. This budget does not make a distinction between statutory and discretionary services which we would expect to see in a Council of this size. The need to address these areas is especially important to the transformation programme. We retain the statutory recommendation (pages 22-23).</p>	<p>R</p>

- G** No significant weaknesses or improvement recommendations.
- A** No significant weaknesses, improvement recommendations made.
- R** Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendation(s) made.

# Financial sustainability (3 of 8)

We considered how the Council:	Commentary on arrangements	Rating
<p>ensures its financial plan is consistent with other plans such as workforce, capital, investment and other operational planning which may include working with other local public bodies as part of a wider system</p>	<p>The Council did not have arrangements in place to manage the Capital programme in line with its strategic objectives. We note some spending on capital which was not accounted for in the programme although this was not material. The Workforce Development Strategy remains in progress in 2025/26.</p>	<p>R</p>
<p>identifies and manages risk to financial resilience, e.g. unplanned changes in demand, including challenge of the assumptions in underlying plans</p>	<p>In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a statutory recommendation that the Council should improve its short and medium-term financial planning including by quantifying financial risk.</p> <p>Financial risks are not quantified in robustness of estimates in the S25 report. For example, it does not address the reliance on the transformation programme and its failure to deliver budget savings. The S151 Officer could also be clearer in this report about the Council's useable reserves given the ring-fencing for the Mersey Gateway. Additional agency spend is not included in the budget and is driving the overspend in children and adult services, although we note there has been improvement in agency spend in children's during 2024/25. Agency use needs building into the budget to control costs. The impact of agency costs is a significant factor in council overspending we include this in our retained statutory recommendation on financial planning on pages 22-23.</p>	<p>R</p>

- G No significant weaknesses or improvement recommendations.
- A No significant weaknesses, improvement recommendations made.
- R Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendation(s) made.

# Financial sustainability (4 of 8)

## Significant weakness identified in relation to financial sustainability

**Key Finding:** In our prior year AAR we made a statutory recommendation that the Council should improve its short and medium-term financial planning including by: ensuring financial plans appropriately account for significant cost pressures, including developing comprehensive plans to address overspending on agency staff, implementing a more robust budget-setting approach, including public budget engagement, ensuring that risks to financial resilience are appropriately highlighted in financial plans, including the section 25 report, ensuring that financial plans are sufficient to bridge all forecast budget gaps and replenish reserves. On 6 March 2024, full Council agreed the 2024/25 budget of £149.49m. At outturn for 2024/25 the Council was £16.07m overspent, 10.7% of its budget. The overspend was funded by £6.07m of reserves and £10m in EFS. The use and cost of agency staff continues to be one of the main contributing factors to the overspend. We note agency staff covering vacancies are not budgeted for in the Council as we would expect to see. We note children's services did start reducing agency overspending in October 2024, but the issue remains in 2025/26.

**Evidence:** On 5 March 2025, full Council agreed the 2025/26 budget of £183.05m. This was a deficit budget of £29.39m funded by EFS. The 2025/26 budget included £8.23m of savings to balance 2026/27. We note these savings are less than the known gap of £14.5m for 2026/27 and this gap does not include the £29.38m gap for 2025/26 funded by EFS. The MTFs in February 2025 identified a budget gap over the subsequent three financial years (2026/27 to 2028/29) of £43.17m in addition to the funding gap of £29.38m for 2025/26, giving a total funding gap of £72.55m over the next four financial years. Further EFS borrowing is expected over the next 3-4 years. At end May 2025 the Council projected an overspend of £6.1m despite a 22% increase in its budget for 2025/26. The overspend is driven by £1.9m of agency staff costs and pressure in the children's and adults social care directorates.

We note, on 10 February 2025 the Government issued a letter to the Council confirming it was minded to approve a capitalisation direction not exceeding £52.8 million, broken down as £20.8m in 2024/25 and £32m in 2025/26. In August 2025, the Council received a letter from MHCLG confirming £10m for 2024/25 in EFS. If no action is taken to reduce the forecast overspend of £6.19m the level of EFS required will increase to £35.57m, above the approved limit. We include this in our statutory recommendation relating to financial planning. The Council did not consult the public on its budget for 2024/25. This was not actioned for 2025/26 budget setting as we would expect to see. We note the Leader of the Council is introducing a star chamber model for 2026/27 budget setting to improve internal budget setting and challenge which is good to see.

# Financial sustainability (5 of 8)

## Significant weakness identified in relation to financial sustainability

**Evidence (continued):** In the Section 25 statement in the adequacy of reserves the S151 Officer says the current level of general and earmarked reserves is £54.8m, although only £11.4m of this is available for immediate need. The Section 25 statement is a statutory requirement and should be robust. CIPFA suggests it should include a summary of reserves clearly outlining unusable and earmarked reserves from general reserves and a reserves narrative summarising the purpose of earmarked reserves and the basis of calculation of general reserves. S151 Officer should be clearer in this statement about the level of general fund balances and the extent to which reserves are held for the Mersey Gateway Bridge. The Robustness of Estimates does not include an assessment of financial risk which we would expect to see with their planned mitigations. The 2024/25 outturn report states other than the General Fund reserve of £5.15m there are no reserves available to help fund future budgets. This is just 2.8% of the net budget for 2025/26 which we do not consider sufficient. The Council's 2024/25 budget and MTFs recognise the need to move away from the short-term approach of using reserves to provide a balanced budget position and avoiding making permanent budget savings. The MTFs 2024/25 - 2026/27 includes a £2m contribution in 2025/26 and 2026/27 which will be provided to replenish reserves. However, it is not clear how this will be achieved with significant budget gaps remaining to be closed. On 31 March 2025, the Council had £16.57m of debt owing to it, of which £12.69m related to adult social care. We note in the 2025/26 budget the Council identified a saving of just £0.1m from debt management. Given the Council's financial position this scale of debt compared with the budget is significant. In September 2025 we note the updated MTFP to 2030/31 shows a medium-term gap of £118.6m and that the Executive will be discussing a financial recovery plan to reduce this gap. We will consider this as part of our 2025/26 assessment of your VFM arrangements.

**Impact:** The Council's financial position is not sustainable in the medium-term without reliance on EFS which must be repaid in full with interest over the long-term and therefore we retain our statutory recommendation.

## Statutory recommendation 1

**SR1:** The Council should improve its short and medium-term financial planning by:

- ensuring that financial plans appropriately account for significant cost pressures, including developing comprehensive plans to address overspending on agency staff
- implementing a more robust budget-setting approach, including public budget engagement
- ensuring that risks to financial resilience are appropriately highlighted in financial plans, including the section 25 report
- ensuring that financial plans are sufficient to bridge all forecast budget gaps and replenish reserves
- ensuring that financial plans are linked to the Council's corporate priorities as set out in its new Corporate Plan

# Financial sustainability (6 of 8)

## Significant weakness identified in relation to financial sustainability

**Key Finding:** In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a statutory recommendation that the Council should develop and implement the transformation programme at scale and pace to address the significant structural budget deficit. The Council has not addressed this recommendation. The Council needs to save £72.55m over the next four years (46% of the 2024/25 net budget), after the assumed EFS use of £98m over the next four years but future years are not yet provisionally agreed by MHCLG.

**Evidence:** The 2024/25 budget included just £2.7m of savings and £4m from the Transformation Programme. The Council only saved £0.01m from the transformation programme in 2024/25 and assumed no savings from transformation in 2025/26. We note the 2025/26 budget identified £0.16m of cost reductions from transformation in 2024/25. The transformation programme cost £2.41m in 2024/25 and is expected to cost £2.43m in 2025/26. In May 2025, the Council had agreed savings of £7.23m for 2025/26 but only £0.43m were rated green. The budget gap for 2026/27 is £14.5m and does not include the 2025/26 gap of £29.39m funded by EFS. In September 2025 we note the updated MTFP to 2030/31 shows a medium-term gap of £118.6m and that the Executive will be discussing a financial recovery plan to reduce this gap. We will consider this as part of our 2025/26 assessment of your VFM arrangements.

Appropriate arrangements are not in place to identify and make savings. The Council has repeated its benchmarking undertaken in 2022 to establish the transformation programme, and this has identified areas of high cost. However, it lacks change management and analytical capability and the capacity to lead transformation, and it has not yet addressed levels of statutory provision.

Arrangements to monitor and report on the delivery of efficiencies need improvement. On 12 June 2025, the Executive received the 2024/25 outturn report which does not identify delivered savings values against expected savings for 2024/25 as we would expect to see. The only reporting on the three-year £20m transformation programme at year end in 2024/25 was the outturn which identified the main area driving the budgetary overspend position was the £4m target against the Transformation Programme, from which savings for the year were minimal.

We have seen no evidence of robust and transparent monitoring arrangements for benefits realisation and tracking savings as a whole programme or a risk register for the programme.



# Financial sustainability (7 of 8)

## Significant weakness identified in relation to financial sustainability

**Impact:** The Council's transformation programme is not delivering at the pace needed to meet the expected future year gaps resulting in the Council not being financially sustainable without reliance on EFS.

## Statutory recommendation 2

**SR2:** The Council should develop and implement its transformation programme at scale and pace to address the significant structural budget deficit. This should include:

- ensuring it has effective overview and control of its transformation programme which is sufficiently focused on budget savings.
- ensuring there is sufficient capacity and skills in the organisation to effectively deliver the required savings, including change management and programme management.
- ensuring the reprioritisation of the programme includes a review of both discretionary spending and the levels at which statutory services are provided and is informed by appropriate stakeholder consultation.
- improving programme management to include officer as well as member assurance boards.
- developing robust and transparent monitoring arrangements for benefits realisation and tracking savings as a whole programme.
- ensuring the programme has a risk and issues log that the PMO updates and uses regularly.

# Financial sustainability (8 of 8)

## Significant weakness identified in relation to financial sustainability

**Key Finding:** The Council is part of the Delivering Better Value in SEND programme with a grant of £1m over 2 years to develop strategies for managing the DSG deficit. The Government has extended the DSG statutory override until March 2028. We are concerned the agreed management plan will not address the deficit and if the statutory override is lifted on 31 March 2028 the DSG deficit can not be met from the Council's very minimal reserves.

**Evidence:** High Needs Block deficits are an issue nationally which the Department for Education (DfE) has been addressing through the Safety Valve and Delivering Better Value in SEND programmes. The Council is part of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme. DBV projections show the Council's DSG deficit rising from £2.9m in 2023 to £33.9m by 2028 and even with mitigations the deficit is expected to be £22.1m. We note the 2024/25-outturn showed in March 2025 the DSG deficit was £14.649m, an increase of £9m since 2023/24. Given the Council's reserves of £5.149m, lifting of the statutory override in March 2028 would be very serious for the council's financial sustainability. In September 2025 we note the MTFs for 2026/27 to 2023/31 showed the DSG deficit in March 2028 as £45.8m.

**Impact:** If the statutory override is not further extended in April 2028 the Council will become liable for the DSG deficit which would significantly impact its financial sustainability.

## Key recommendation 1

**KR1:** The Council should urgently address its increasing DSG deficit and work at pace, with its partners, to deliver a deficit management plan to restrict further deficit increases while delivering the improvements to its SEND services. This plan must include key actions that should be reported frequently to a clearly designated forum capable of holding officers to account.

# Governance (1 of 9)

We considered how the Council: **Commentary on arrangements**

Rating

<p>monitors and assesses risk and how the Council gains assurance over the effective operation of internal controls, including arrangements to prevent and detect fraud</p>	<p>In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a key recommendation that the Council needs to significantly improve its risk strategy, improve the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) and ensure officers and members are reviewing strategic and directorate risks at least quarterly and ensuring risk is adequately considered in financial reporting. The Council drafted a new risk management policy in 2024/25, aligned with the Government’s Orange Book of risk management, which was agreed by the Executive in July 2025. A new CRR format will now be developed and reported quarterly to the Executive and to Audit and Governance Board. We conclude the Council has progressed our recommendation so there is no longer a key recommendation and we make an improvement recommendation on page 33 to improve the CRR format and ensure consistency with service risk registers.</p> <p>In our AAR for 2023/24 we made an improvement recommendation for the Council to enhance its internal audit arrangements. In June 2025, the audit manual was still not complete. Links are made to the CRR in the audit plan for 2025/26. Audit working papers are stored in a database. We have identified further improvements are needed to internal audit reporting and make a revised improvement recommendation on page 34.</p> <p>In 2023/24 we made an improvement recommendation relating to whistleblowing, the Council did update the policy and this recommendation is now closed.</p>	<p>A</p>
<p>approaches and carries out its annual budget setting process</p>	<p>In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a statutory recommendation that the Council should improve its short and medium-term financial planning including by implementing a more robust budget-setting approach, including meaningful public budget engagement. The Council did not consult the public on its budget for 2025/26. We retain this recommendation and report it in financial sustainability. We note the Leader of the Council is introducing a star chamber model for 2026/27 budget setting, to improve internal budget setting and challenge which is good to see.</p>	<p>R</p>

Page 37

- G** No significant weaknesses or improvement recommendations.
- A** No significant weaknesses, improvement recommendations made.
- R** Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendation(s) made.

# Governance (2 of 9)

We considered how the Council:	Commentary on arrangements	Rating
<p>ensures effective processes and systems are in place to ensure budgetary control; to communicate relevant, accurate and timely management information; supports its statutory financial reporting; and ensures corrective action is taken where needed, including in relation to significant partnerships</p>	<p>Budget monitoring and outturn reporting to the Executive during the year supports the communication of timely and accurate financial information and provides a clear understanding of the Council's financial position, covering revenue and capital budgets. The Council has documented responsibilities in respect of budgetary control and management set out in its constitution.</p> <p>As noted in financial sustainability, financial risks are not included sufficiently in the budget papers to members. Reports do not identify the key risks facing the business and what the Council is doing to address these and there is no tie in with the CRR risks which we would expect to see. We also noted a weakness in the Council's arrangements for monitoring savings and have included it in our key recommendation on savings and transformation, so we do not repeat these conclusions here.</p>	G
<p>ensures it makes properly informed decisions, supported by appropriate evidence and allowing for challenge and transparency, including from audit and governance board.</p>	<p>In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a statutory recommendation that the Council should develop and implement the transformation programme at scale and pace to address the significant structural budget deficit. We have retained our statutory recommendation relating to transformation in financial sustainability on pages 24 and 25. We are concerned about the Council's pace and capacity and capability to address the challenges it has relating to financial sustainability and we have raised a new statutory recommendation relating to corporate control and pace of change on page 30-31.</p> <p>In our AAR for 2023/24 we made an improvement recommendation for the Council to review its overview and scrutiny arrangements. The Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) report also made a recommendation to strengthen scrutiny in September 2024. The Council has no dedicated scrutiny officers which we would expect to see. We retain our prior year recommendation on page 35.</p> <p>In our AAR for 2023/24 we made an improvement recommendation for the Council to enhance the effectiveness of its Audit and Governance Board. We have made a revised internal audit improvement recommendation on page 34 which includes recommendations for the Audit and Governance Board.</p>	R
<p><b>G</b> No significant weaknesses or improvement recommendations.</p> <p><b>A</b> No significant weaknesses, improvement recommendations made.</p> <p><b>R</b> Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendation(s) made.</p>		

# Governance (3 of 9)

We considered how the Council:	Commentary on arrangements	Rating
<p>monitors and ensures appropriate standards, such as meeting legislative/regulatory requirements and standards in terms of staff and board member behaviour</p>	<p>In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a key recommendation for the Council to urgently update its arrangements for business continuity and disaster recovery planning. The Council has made a start on this by developing joint arrangements between disaster recovery and business continuity. We note a disaster recovery plan is not expected to be fully tested until September 2025. We note staff training on cyber security is expected over Summer 2025 and gaps remain in its cyber security although the Council obtained Public Service Network (PSN) accreditation in April 2025. We have revised our prior year key recommendation on page 32.</p> <p>We also made an improvement recommendation for the Council to improve its arrangements for member and officer declarations of interest by updating member and officer declarations annually at the start of each year. The Council still has no single register of member interests as we would expect to see, and a sample of member interests were out of date. We retain our improvement recommendation on page 35.</p> <p>The Council has good arrangements in place to ensure that it meets legislative and regulatory standards where it procures or commissions services.</p>	<p>R</p>

- G** No significant weaknesses or improvement recommendations.
- A** No significant weaknesses, improvement recommendations made.
- R** Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendation(s) made.

# Governance (4 of 9)

## Significant weakness identified in relation to governance

**Key Finding:** In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a statutory recommendation that the Council should develop and implement the transformation programme at scale and pace to address the significant structural budget deficit. We have reported on the retention of this statutory recommendation for 2024/25 on page 22. We also retained our prior year statutory recommendation relating to financial planning on page 23. The Council does not have sufficient corporate control and is not working at the pace needed to address the state of its financial sustainability and deliver budget savings from its three-year transformation programme. This presents a significant weakness to the Council.

**Evidence:** On 1 February 2023, full Council approved a three-year £20m transformation programme. Programme costs are funded by £7m of capital receipts. The Transformation programme terms of reference has an end date of 31 March 2026. In August 2024, a Transformation Programme Board was established following a decision of the Executive Board in July 2024. The Re-imagine Halton Programme Board is a working party of ten Executive Board members and since November 2024 two members of Audit and Governance Committee. Several corporate officers also form part of the Transformation Programme Board. We note six focused areas - children's and SEND, adults, waste, employer of choice, customer journey, and accelerating growth. Each has a named director or senior manager and a named portfolio member. We note there is no effective risk management arrangement in place such as a risk register for the programme and effective risk mitigation and assurances.

Our view is shared by the Local Government Association (LGA). In September 2024, the LGA undertook a corporate peer challenge and identified a high level of concern about the Council's financial resilience. It recommended the Council took urgent action to deal with the in-year position and reset the approach and culture around budget planning, decision making, management and grip. It recommended that a clear finance improvement plan is needed across the immediate – mid-term, to give clear oversight and grip of the actions to deal with this challenge, the progress being made, any delays experienced and the implications of this. This improvement plan was yet to be started in June 2025.

Support for addressing the financial challenges faced by the Council is not fully embedded across all of the leadership team and elected members. We have seen evidence of some elected members pushing back on the need for transformation and savings despite our prior year statutory recommendations on financial planning and transformation.

# Governance (5 of 9)

## Significant weakness identified in relation to Governance

**Evidence (continued):** We note adult social care was expected to deliver £10m between 2023 and 2026 but has so far only saved £0.04m. We note the Finance Team is not expecting to save anything from its transformation programme in 2025/26.

We note in June 2025 the Council has a list of revised transformation schemes, but these were not yet costed or fully developed. There was also evidence of scope creep in the transformation programme meaning it is not sufficiently focused on the £20m savings target.

The Council lacks capacity for change and transformation. The Head of Transformation works just three days a week and he does not lead the transformation team. There is a lack of data and business analysis skills in the Council to support decision-making. The Council has used cost benchmarking in 2025/26 to identify high-cost areas but without these additional skills and the buy-in of all the senior leadership team this will not achieve the level of savings the Council needs to make.

**Impact:** The Council is lacking corporate control which is impacting on financial sustainability, governance and the delivery of the transformation programme.

## Statutory recommendation 3

**SR3:** Senior officers and elected members need to take effective corporate control of the issues highlighted by this report and prioritise at pace corporate effort in managing the issues identified in relation to financial sustainability and embed strengthened governance into the Council.

The Council must ensure it has capacity and capability in its management team to achieve this and address the significant weaknesses we have identified in relation to financial sustainability.

In time for budget setting 2026/27 we would expect to see a well-developed medium-term corporate savings and transformation programme to manage MTFP funding gaps and to reduce future reliance on EFS, with clear responsibilities and timescales.

# Governance (6 of 9)

## Significant weakness identified in relation to governance

**Key finding:** In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a key recommendation for the Council to urgently update its arrangements for business continuity and disaster recovery planning. The Council did make progress to address this weakness, but arrangements remain untested in 2025/26 with some IT systems yet to have their cyber security levels identified.

**Evidence:** The Council has started developing joint arrangements between business continuity and disaster recovery in 2024/25. It updated its Business Continuity Plan format to address emerging threats, including enhanced disaster recovery measures with a focus on IT security and held a training exercise in November 2024. The Council has undertaken an evaluation of the cyber assessment framework and has an improvement plan in place. We note the Council obtained PSN accreditation in April 2025. However, we note in June 2025 that two more months of testing were needed on disaster recovery before the disaster recovery plan is fully tested in September 2025. We note staff training on cyber security is expected over Summer 2025 and gaps remaining in business continuity plans and cyber security arrangements for ICT systems. The Council has not identified for each of its key IT systems the required level of IT security.

**Impact:** The Council has no tested arrangements for business continuity or disaster recovery which could impact the whole council.

## Key recommendation 2

**KR2:** The Council needs to work at pace to finalise and test its arrangements for business continuity and disaster recovery planning. It also needs to ensure all staff and members are trained in cyber security and it develops a process to validate how its ICT systems comply with cyber security arrangements.



# Governance (7 of 9)

## Area for Improvement identified: risk management

**Key Finding:** In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a key recommendation that the Council needs to significantly improve its risk strategy, improve the CRR and ensure officers and members are reviewing strategic and directorate risks at least quarterly and ensuring risk is adequately considered in financial reporting. The Council drafted a new risk management policy in 2024/25, aligned with the Government's Orange Book, which was agreed by the Executive in July 2025. A new CRR format will now be developed and reported quarterly to the Executive and to Audit and Governance Board.

**Evidence:** In 2024/25 the Audit and Governance Board saw the CRR in June 2024, it then received an update in June 2025. We expect quarterly reviews of the CRR by the Audit and Governance Board. The CRR does not currently include target risk score, assurance and risk treatment and risk appetite. We note the Section 25 statement in the budget does not quantify risk as we would expect to see and its robustness of estimates does not include an assessment of financial risk together with mitigation which we would also expect to see. For example, it does not address the reliance on the transformation programme and its failure to deliver budget savings.

**Impact:** Effective risk management is an essential part of the Council's control environment.

## Improvement Recommendation 1

**IR1:** The Council should continue to improve its arrangements for risk management by:

- Improving the CRR format to include target risk score, assurance and risk treatment and risk appetite.
- Reflecting changes to the CRR for directorate level risk management.
- Ensuring the S25 statement includes quantified risks which are assessed as part of the robustness for estimates.
- Embedding the new risk policy across the Council through training for officers and elected members on risk management.
- Ensuring the CRR is reported quarterly to the Executive and to Audit and Governance Board aligned with performance and financial reporting.

# Governance (8 of 9)

## Area for Improvement identified: Internal audit

**Key Finding:** In our AAR for 2023/24 we made an improvement recommendation that the Council needed to enhance its internal audit arrangements by: putting in place an audit manual, making specific linkages between the audit plan and the Council's significant risks and strategic objectives, retaining planning records. In June 2025, the audit manual was still not complete, and we identified further improvements are needed. We also made an improvement recommendation for the Council to enhance the effectiveness of its Audit and Governance Board

**Evidence:** In March 2025, the Audit and Governance Board received an internal audit progress report. We note this covering report does not provide members with reasons why some audits are limited assurance and the recommendations being made to address that together with the timescale as we would expect to see. We would also expect internal audit reports to be reported as Part A agenda items in a transparent manner. The initial Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 includes the Head of Internal Audit Opinion for 2023/24 not 2024/25 as we would expect to see. We note that the first draft of the AGS does not identify the statutory or key recommendations we made in 2023/24 or progress to address these as we would expect to see. In the revised constitution from April 2025, the Audit and Governance Board is responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and policies. It is also responsible for ensuring compliance with the Code of Financial Management but has not seen it. We note on 16 May 2025 full Council agreed to the Audit and Governance Board having an independent member, but recruitment is yet to take place at the time of this audit. Procurement waivers were taken to Audit and Governance Board in June 2025 for 2024/25.

**Impact:** Effective internal audit is an essential part of the Council's control environment.

## Improvement Recommendation 2

**IR2:** The Council should further enhance its internal audit arrangements by:

- Improving audit reporting to demonstrate transparency and provide members with reasons why some audits have limited assurance and the recommendations being made in the progress report together with the timescale in the progress report.
- Ensuring the AGS identifies the statutory and key recommendations made by external audit together with actions and timescales to address these.
- Strengthening the Audit and Governance Board to include formal reports on standards, making internal audit reports Part A to improve transparency, and providing reporting on the Financial Management Code and on Treasury Management.

# Governance (9 of 9)

## Area for Improvement identified: Overview and Scrutiny

**Key Finding:** In our AAR for 2023/24 we made an improvement recommendation for the Council to review its overview and scrutiny arrangements to provide earlier engagement of scrutiny to enhance decision-making and ensure scrutiny receive reports for consideration to provide an opportunity for challenge. The LGA also made a recommendation to strengthen scrutiny in September 2024. The LGA CPC report said the Council needs to take steps to support Policy and Performance Boards to have a greater impact.

**Evidence:** We note the Council has no dedicated scrutiny officers which we would expect to see. In June 2025, the Council was working with the LGA to provide support for scrutiny and reshape its committees. We note in June 2025, the Corporate PPB received an update on spending in January 2025 which is far too late, this was two months after it was shared with the Executive Board.

**Impact:** Scrutiny is insufficiently developed and integrated into Council decision-making. Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 (“the 2000 Act”) requires all local authorities operating executive arrangements to have one or more committees to scrutinise the actions of the executive and the authority and provide overview of matters affecting the authority’s area and the inhabitants of that area.

## Improvement Recommendation 3

**IR3:** The Council needs to review its overview and scrutiny arrangements to provide earlier engagement of scrutiny to enhance decision-making and ensure scrutiny receive reports for consideration to provide an opportunity for challenge.

## Area for Improvement identified: Declarations of interest

**Key Finding:** In our AAR for 2023/24 we made an improvement recommendation that the Council needed to improve its arrangements for member and officer declarations of interest by updating member and officer declarations annually at the start of each year.

**Evidence:** The Council still does not have a single register of member interests as we would expect to see and our audit work identified 2 members with undisclosed interests.

**Impact:** Not having up to date declaration of interest presents a risk to the Council

## Improvement Recommendation 4

**IR4:** The Council needs to improve its arrangements for member and officer declarations of interest.

# Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness (1 of 5)

## We considered how the Council: Commentary on arrangements

Rating

<p>uses financial and performance information to assess performance to identify areas for improvement</p>	<p>In our AAR for 2023/24 we made a key recommendation that the Council needs to improve its performance management arrangements. We have found no evidence of direct link between corporate and service plans or any public-facing annual report. However, there is a corporate plan for 2024/29 to build on. In 2024/25 there was no quarterly reporting aligned to corporate priorities and directorate reporting was still not being reported consistently each quarter as we identified in 2023/24. We have not seen a new performance framework to join up the corporate plan with directorate and service performance and any evidence of benchmarking to national or nearest neighbours in the directorate reports. In 2024/25 performance risk and finance reporting was still not integrated as we would expect to see. Therefore, we will retain our key recommendation on page 38.</p>	<p>R</p>
<p>evaluates the services it provides to assess performance and identify areas for improvement</p>	<p>In our prior year AAR, we made a key recommendation that the Council needs to significantly improve its services for children and young people by putting in place arrangements to improve its SEND services working with health partners and by delivering the improvement plan to address the wider children's services inspection findings. In May 2024, Ofsted identified Children's Services in Halton as inadequate' across all areas. On 30 August 2024, the Secretary of State issued a Statutory Direction requiring urgent improvements and appointed a Children's Commissioner. The Commissioner worked closely with the Council and published a report in December 2024, with 24 recommendations for the Council and its partners to implement. Implementation of the Commissioner's recommendations is monitored by the independently chaired Children's Ofsted Improvement Board. The Department for Education issued a revised statutory direction in February 2025. We have noted some progress identified by Ofsted to address these concerns but in 2025/26 there are still actions being monitored by the DfE and Ofsted and we retain our key recommendation (page 39).</p> <p>In July 2025, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published its assessment of Halton's adult social care and gave a good rating following the inspection in March 2025.</p>	<p>R</p>

Page 46

- G** No significant weaknesses or improvement recommendations.
- A** No significant weaknesses, improvement recommendations made.
- R** Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendation(s) made.

# Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness (2 of 5)

We considered how the Council:	Commentary on arrangements	Rating
ensures it delivers its role within significant partnerships and engages with stakeholders it has identified, in order to assess whether it is meeting its objectives	Formal partnerships include the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Safer Halton Partnership, the Halton Children’s Board, and the Halton Learning Alliance. An executive director from the Halton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is also a member of the Council’s Management Team. The Health and Wellbeing Board provides a key forum for public accountability of the NHS, Adult Social Care, Children’s Services, Public Health, and other commissioned services relating to the wider determinants of health in Halton. While the Council has members sitting on partnership boards, consideration should be given to annual partnership review which is reported annually to Executive Board.	G
commissions or procures services, assessing whether it is realising the expected benefits	In our AAR for 2023/24 we made an improvement recommendation for the Council to improve its contract management arrangements by putting in place formal contract management review processes and ensuring performance and financial management are included in contract review meetings and are formally documented. The Council has improved contract management in children’s services. However, no formal contract meetings are held with Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority (MRWA) and financial performance is not discussed. In 2024/25 MRWA was updating the IAA with Halton to reflect the waste changes. This did not happen by November 2024 as planned and was not agreed by August 2025. We note the current MRWA contract does not enable Halton to fulfil its duties under the Simpler Recycling changes which came into effect from 31 March 2025. The Council is taking steps to address this in August 2025, but it is not yet in place. We make a revised improvement recommendation on page 40.	A

- G** No significant weaknesses or improvement recommendations.
- A** No significant weaknesses, improvement recommendations made.
- R** Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendation(s) made.

# Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness (3 of 5)

## Significant weakness identified in relation to improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

**Key finding:** In our prior year AAR we made a key recommendation that the Council needs to improve its performance management arrangement. We note the Council has got a corporate plan but has not progressed the development of a performance framework and in 2024/25 did not report consistently.

**Evidence:** We have found no evidence of a golden thread or any public-facing annual report. However, there is a corporate plan for 2024/29 to build on. In 2024/25 there was not consistent quarterly reporting aligned to corporate priorities and directorate reporting was still not being reported consistently each quarter as we identified in 2023/24. We have not seen a new performance framework to join up the corporate plan with directorate and service performance and any evidence of benchmarking to national or nearest neighbours in the directorate reports. In 2024/25 performance risk and finance reporting was still not integrated as we would expect to see. Therefore, we will retain our key recommendation.

**Impact:** The Council needs to significantly improve its arrangements for performance management and ensure it has a golden thread in place and performance is consistently reported alongside nearest neighbours.

## Key recommendation 3

**KR3:** The Council needs to improve its performance management arrangements by:

- establishing a golden thread for the Council, by improving the performance management framework at corporate and service levels linking outcomes to expected annual measures to track success and reporting these to the public.
- agreeing performance outcomes, that can be measured, at least annually as part of the new performance management framework.
- improving performance reporting to include benchmarking with 'nearest neighbours' data where possible;
- integrating performance, risk and finance reporting to drive improvement and sharing these reports quarterly with the Executive Board.
- ensuring consistency across directorates regarding the reporting of corporate performance data to enable outcomes to be tracked.

# Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness (4 of 5)

## Significant weakness identified in relation to improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

**Key finding:** In May 2024, Ofsted identified Children's Services in Halton as inadequate'. In August 2024, the Secretary of State issued a Statutory Direction requiring urgent improvements and appointed a Children's Commissioner. The Commissioner worked closely with the Council and published a report in December 2024, which concluded the Council was in the early stages of its improvement journey. To support this, the Commissioner made 24 recommendations for the Council and its partners to implement. Implementation is being monitored by the independently chaired Children's Ofsted Improvement Board.

**Evidence:** The Department for Education issued a revised statutory direction in February 2025. The Secretary of State was satisfied while there was some improvement, the Council was still failing to perform to an adequate standard, and as would be expected, a DfE Improvement Adviser for Children's Services will continue in Halton to provide ongoing monitoring and support until the DfE is satisfied adequate improvement and sustainability is made. On 2 June 2025 Ofsted published a letter following an Ofsted monitoring visit in April 2025. It found evidence of improvement and noted steady progress in the development of social work practice and noted that senior leaders had continued to establish some positive foundations for improving practice. It also identified some areas where there was still more to do. On 15 July 2024, the Children, Young, People's and Families Policy and Performance Board received a report on SEND improvement. The SEND Priority Action Plan mandates the production of 4 new or revised strategies: SEND Strategy 2025-2030, Alternative Provision Strategy, SEND Sufficiency Strategy and the Waiting Well Strategy. All documents will be published within the 18-month delivery schedule of the Priority Action Plan. We note when quarter 4 performance was reported in June 2025 the first three of these strategies were still progressing.

**Impact:** The Council's services for children and young people were a significant weakness in 2024/25 that continued into 2025/26.

## Key recommendation 4

**KR4:** The Council needs to significantly improve its services for children and young people by putting in place arrangements to improve its SEND services working with health partners and by delivering the improvement plan to address the wider children's services inspection findings.

# Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness (5 of 5)

## Area for Improvement: contract management

**Key Finding:** The Council has no formal contract meetings with Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority (MRWA) and financial performance is not discussed formally or informally.

**Evidence:** The Council needs to ensure regular contract meetings are held and performance and finance is validated on this significant contract. In 2024/25 MRWA was updating the IAA with Halton to reflect the waste changes. This did not happen by November 2024 as planned and was not agreed by August 2025. We note the current MRWA contract does not enable Halton to fulfil its duties under the Simpler Recycling changes which came into effect from 31 March 2025. The Council is taking steps to address this in August 2025, but it is not yet in place.

**Impact:** The Council may not achieve value for money from its waste contract, and it is not delivering it statutory responsibly for simpler recycling.

## Improvement Recommendation 5

**IR5:** The Council should improve its contract management arrangements by putting in place formal contract management review processes and ensuring performance and financial management are included in contract review meetings and are formally documented. It also needs to ensure that the inter authority agreement with MRWA is formally agreed and signed by both parties and the waste contract is amended to enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duties.



# **05 Summary of Value for Money Recommendations raised in 2024/25**

# Statutory recommendations retained or raised in 2024/25 (1 of 3)

	Recommendation	Relates to	Management Actions
SR1	<p>The Council should improve its short and medium-term financial planning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring that financial plans appropriately account for significant cost pressures, including developing comprehensive plans to address overspending on agency staff</li> <li>implementing a more robust budget-setting approach, including public budget engagement</li> <li>ensuring that risks to financial resilience are appropriately highlighted in financial plans, including the section 25 report</li> <li>ensuring that financial plans are sufficient to bridge all forecast budget gaps and replenish reserves</li> <li>ensuring that financial plans are linked to the Council's corporate priorities as set out in its new Corporate Plan</li> </ul>	Financial sustainability (pages 19 – 26)	<p>Actions: The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026-2031 has been further developed to highlight risks regarding financial resilience and reflect all significant forecast cost pressures we are aware of.</p> <p>The MTFS has been extended to cover five years, to reflect the Council's challenging financial circumstances and financial risks. It highlights all key areas of financial pressure and the work being undertaken corporately and across service directorates to address these pressures.</p> <p>Three scenarios have been developed in preparing the MTFS, to reflect continuation of the current position, a median scenario reducing costs to the benchmarked nearest neighbour average, and best case scenario whereby costs are reduced sufficiently to deliver a balanced budget by 2030/31 without reliance upon EFS.</p> <p>The approach to budget setting has been re-focused to make it more robust, with budget savings proposals being sought by Management Team for 2026/27 onwards to achieve the best case scenario. These include longer-term proposals being developed via the re-shaped Transformation Programme. The proposals will be presented for consideration by the Transformation Board, Budget Working Group, Executive Board and Political Groups.</p> <p>The Section 25 report within the 2026/27 Budget Report will be further enhanced to highlight current and future financial risks, the level of useable reserves, and progress with delivering the MTFS best case scenario.</p> <p>When considering budget savings proposals, Members will consider the Council's priorities and particularly the impact upon social care services and thereby vulnerable residents. Further work will be undertaken to consider how the budget setting process can be closer linked to the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out within the new Corporate Plan.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Director of Finance</p> <p>Due Date: 31 March 2026</p>

# Statutory recommendations retained or raised in 2024/25 (2 of 3)

Recommendation	Relates to	Management Actions
<p data-bbox="188 415 1001 568">The Council should develop and implement its transformation programme at scale and pace to address the significant structural budget deficit. This should include:</p> <ul data-bbox="188 586 1031 1319" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="188 586 1031 701">• ensuring it has effective overview and control of its transformation programme which is sufficiently focused on budget savings.</li> <li data-bbox="188 715 1031 829">• ensuring there is sufficient capacity and skills in the organisation to effectively deliver the required savings, including change management and PMO.</li> <li data-bbox="104 843 1031 1001">SR2 • ensuring the reprioritisation of the programme includes a review of both discretionary spending and the levels at which statutory services are provided and is informed by appropriate stakeholder consultation.</li> <li data-bbox="188 1015 1031 1086">• improving programme management to include officer as well as member assurance boards.</li> <li data-bbox="188 1100 1031 1215">• developing robust and transparent monitoring arrangements for benefits realisation and tracking savings as a whole programme.</li> <li data-bbox="188 1229 1031 1319">• ensuring the programme has a risk and issues log that the PMO updates and uses regularly.</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="1039 786 1235 939">Financial sustainability (pages 19 – 26)</p>	<p data-bbox="1251 544 2425 739">Actions: The Transformation Board are reshaping the Programme to prioritise the achievement of savings for implementation as a matter of urgency. Benchmarking against comparators is being used to focus upon service areas exhibiting significant variances against comparator average spend. Viability assessments are being presented to the Board seeking approval to progress with full reviews.</p> <p data-bbox="1251 753 2425 829">The resourcing, skills and knowledge within the Transformation Delivery Unit is being considered, to enable the Programme to be driven forward at pace.</p> <p data-bbox="1251 843 2425 1072">The Transformation Delivery Board (officers) and the Transformation Programme Board (Members) continue to provide governance and oversight of programme delivery, ensuring a focus upon budget reductions and directing capacity towards the generation of savings to meet the MTFs funding gaps over the forthcoming five years. Benefit tracking is being improved as part of the governance reporting regime for the Programme.</p> <p data-bbox="1251 1086 2425 1129">Responsible Officer: Interim Director of Transformation</p> <p data-bbox="1251 1143 2425 1186">Due Date: 31 March 2026</p>

# Statutory recommendations retained or raised in 2024/25 (3 of 3)

Recommendation	Relates to	Management Actions
<p>SR3 Senior officers and elected members need to take effective corporate control of the issues highlighted by this report and prioritise at pace corporate effort in managing the issues identified in relation to financial sustainability and embed strengthened governance into the Council.</p> <p>The Council must ensure it has capacity and capability in its management team to achieve this and address the significant weaknesses we have identified in relation to financial sustainability.</p> <p>In time for budget setting 2026/27 we would expect to see a well-developed medium-term corporate savings and transformation programme to manage MTFP funding gaps and to reduce future reliance on EFS, with clear responsibilities and timescales.</p>	<p>Governance (pages 27 – 35)</p>	<p>Actions: The Interim Chief Executive’s key priority is to ensure the Council’s financial challenges are addressed as a matter of urgency, with full co-operation of all officers and Members. Governance arrangements will be strengthened to ensure the effective delivery of actions required to bring the Council onto a sustainable financial footing over the period of the MTFS. The senior officer leadership group is being fully engaged to implement spending constraints, changes to service delivery, use of innovation, and delivery of savings proposals.</p> <p>Work is underway to develop savings proposals for 2026/27 onwards including those from the reshaped Transformation Programme, for consideration by Members, to address the funding gaps highlighted by the MTFS and eventually remove the reliance on EFS.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Interim Chief Executive</p> <p>Due Date: 31 March 2026</p>

# Key recommendations raised in 2024/25 (1 of 3)

	Recommendation	Relates to	Management Actions
KR1	<p>The Council should urgently address its increasing DSG deficit and work at pace, with its partners, to deliver a deficit management plan to restrict further deficit increases while delivering the improvements to its SEND services. This plan must include key actions that should be reported frequently to a clearly designated forum capable of holding officers to account.</p>	<p>Financial sustainability (pages 19 – 26)</p>	<p>Actions: The Council is part of the DfE pilot for Delivering Best Value in SEND, for which a Delivery Plan was approved by the DfE and is being implemented, with support from partners, the DfE and Cipfa to address the spiralling demand and costs of High Need SEND pupils. Progress with delivery of the programme is being monitored by the Children &amp; Young People’s Policy and Performance Board.</p> <p>The MTFs included details of the forecast DSG deficits and the issues surrounding the statutory over-ride. This was also highlighted in the Section 25 Statement within the 2025/26 Budget Report.</p> <p>The DSG deficit issue affects many councils across the country. Whilst the Council is taking urgent steps to curb High Needs costs going forward, Government recognises that the scale of accumulated DSG deficits to date is such that a national solution is required, and this is being considered alongside the current Fair Funding Review.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Executive Director Children’s</p> <p>Due Date: 31 March 2026</p>
KR2	<p>The Council needs to work at pace to finalise and test its arrangements for business continuity and disaster recovery planning. It also needs to ensure all staff and members are trained in cyber security and it develops a process to validate how its ICT systems comply with cyber security arrangements.</p>	<p>Governance (pages 27 – 35)</p>	<p>Actions: Business Continuity Plans have been updated and the format revised to reflect emerging threats in the current operating environment. These incorporate disaster recovery factors, particularly around IT security and are to be tested. Online training is being rolled out to ensure officers and Members are fully conversant with cyber security.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Director of ICT</p> <p>Due Date: 31 March 2026</p>

# Key recommendations raised in 2024/25 (2 of 3)

Recommendation	Relates to	Management Actions
<p data-bbox="191 422 1057 496">The Council needs to improve its performance management arrangements by:</p> <ul data-bbox="191 515 1057 1182" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="191 515 1057 701">• establishing a golden thread for the Council, by improving the performance management framework at corporate and service levels linking outcomes to expected annual measures to track success and reporting these to the public.</li> <li data-bbox="191 719 1057 829">• agreeing performance outcomes, that can be measured, at least annually as part of the new performance management framework.</li> <li data-bbox="191 848 1057 922">• improving performance reporting to include benchmarking with ‘nearest neighbours’ data where possible;</li> <li data-bbox="191 941 1057 1051">• integrating performance, risk and finance reporting to drive improvement and sharing these reports quarterly with the Executive Board.</li> <li data-bbox="191 1069 1057 1182">• ensuring consistency across directorates regarding the reporting of corporate performance data to enable outcomes to be tracked.</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="1075 708 1304 893">Improvement economy, efficiency and effectiveness (pages 36 – 40)</p>	<p data-bbox="1330 601 2433 901">Actions: A new performance management framework is being rolled out and work will continue to fully implement this as soon as possible. A core set of Key Performance Indicators have been incorporated into the quarterly performance reporting regime, linked to the new corporate priorities and built upon Departmental business plans and performance monitoring. A corporate data project is being implemented to pull together relevant performance data and provide links to service data, with increased use of benchmarking in setting targets and monitoring outcomes.</p> <p data-bbox="1330 919 2211 955">Responsible Officer: Interim Director of HR &amp; Corporate Affairs</p> <p data-bbox="1330 973 1691 1009">Due Date: 31 March 2026</p>

# Key recommendations raised in 2024/25 (3 of 3)

Recommendation	Relates to	Management Actions
KR4	<p>The Council needs to significantly improve its services for children and young people by putting in place arrangements to improve its SEND services working with health partners and by delivering the improvement plan to address the wider children's services inspection findings.</p>	<p>Improvement economy, efficiency and effectiveness (pages 36 – 40)</p> <p>Actions: The Council is part of the DfE pilot for Delivering Best Value in SEND, for which a Delivery Plan was approved by the DfE and is being implemented, with support from partners, the DfE and Cipfa to address the spiralling demand and costs of High Need SEND pupils. Progress with delivery of the programme is being monitored by the Children &amp; Young People's Policy and Performance Board. The independently chaired Ofsted Improvement Board have established an Improvement Delivery Plan which is being monitored monthly by the Board and continues to develop improved outcomes for children and reduced costs. This work will continue with support from corporate departments and advised by a DfE representative on the Board.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Executive Director Children's</p> <p>Due Date: 31 March 2026</p>

# Improvement recommendations raised in 2024/25 (1 of 2)

	Recommendation	Relates to	Management Actions
IR1	<p>The Council should continue to improve its arrangements for risk management by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving the CRR format to include target risk score, assurance and risk treatment and risk appetite.</li> <li>Reflecting changes to the CRR for directorate level risk management.</li> <li>Ensuring the S25 statement includes quantified risks which are assessed as part of the robustness for estimates.</li> <li>Embedding the new risk policy across the Council through training for officers and elected members on risk management.</li> <li>Ensuring the CRR is reported quarterly to the Executive and to Audit and Governance Board aligned with performance and financial reporting.</li> </ul>	Governance (pages 27 -35)	<p>Actions: The Council has reviewed its approach to risk management, with external support from Zurich Municipal (the Council’s Insurers). A new risk management policy is being considered by Executive Board on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2025, following which a new corporate risk register and monitoring regime will be implemented, supported by training for officers and Members. The recommendations from the Annual Auditor’s Report will be incorporated into the revised arrangements.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Interim Director of HR &amp; Corporate Affairs Due Date: 31 March 2026</p>
IR2	<p>The Council should further enhance its internal audit arrangements by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving audit reporting to demonstrate transparency and provide members with reasons why some audits have limited assurance in the progress report and the recommendations being made together with the timescale.</li> <li>Ensuring the AGS identifies the statutory and key recommendations made by external audit together with actions and timescales to address these.</li> <li>Strengthening the Audit and Governance Board to include formal reports on standards, making internal audit reports Part A to improve transparency, and providing reporting on the Financial Management Code and on Treasury Management.</li> </ul>	Governance (pages 27 – 35)	<p>Actions: Further enhancements will be made to Internal Audit reporting arrangements, and amendments have been made to the 2024/25 AGS to reflect the recommendations. As assessment against the Cipfa Financial Code is being reported to the Audit &amp; Governance Board with updates thereafter. An update on Standards is given to each Audit &amp; Governance Board whenever there are relevant matters to report. Consideration will be given to also reporting Treasury Management matters to Audit &amp; Governance Board in addition to Executive Board.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Director of Finance Due Date: 31 March 2026</p>



# Improvement recommendations raised in 2024/25 (2 of 2)

	Recommendation	Relates to	Management Actions
IR3	The Council needs to review its overview and scrutiny arrangements to provide earlier engagement of scrutiny to enhance decision-making and ensure scrutiny receive reports for consideration to provide an opportunity for challenge.	Governance (pages 27 – 35)	<p>Actions: Scrutiny processes are being reviewed via the Members' Scrutiny Chairs Group, to develop and enhance the Council's scrutiny arrangements. Policy and Performance Board titles and terms of reference have been amended which reflect the Council's new priorities in the Corporate Plan. Work will also be carried out with external advisors to further enhance scrutiny.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Director of Finance</p> <p>Due Date: 31 March 2026</p>
IR4	The Council needs to improve its arrangements for member and officer declarations of interest.	Governance (pages 27 – 35)	<p>Actions: The Council recognises the importance of having an up-to-date declaration of interests and is taking steps to ensure its arrangements are robust. Legislation requires that Members register their interests upon election and then notify any subsequent changes within 28 days of them taking place. Members will now be asked to update their registrations of interest at the start of each municipal year in May.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Director of Legal &amp; Democratic Services</p> <p>Due Date: 31 March 2026</p>
IR5	The Council should improve its contract management arrangements by putting in place formal contract management review processes and ensuring performance and financial management are included in contract review meetings and are formally documented. It also needs to ensure that the inter authority agreement with MRWA is formally agreed and signed by both parties and the waste contract is amended to enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duties.	Improvement economy, efficiency and effectiveness (pages 36 – 40)	<p>Actions: The Transformation Delivery Unit are currently reviewing council-wide contract management arrangements, with a view to making recommendations to the Transformation Board to put in place more formal contract management review processes and documentation. Steps will be taken to ensure the inter authority agreement with MRWA is formally agreed and signed by both parties and the waste contract is amended to enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duties.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Director of Transformation and Executive Director Environment &amp; Regeneration</p> <p>Due Date: 31 March 2026</p>

# **06 Follow up of previous Key and Statutory recommendations**

# Follow up of 2023/24 Statutory recommendations

Prior Recommendation	Raised	Progress	Current status	Further action
<p>The Council should improve its short and medium-term financial planning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring that financial plans appropriately account for significant cost pressures, including developing comprehensive plans to address overspending on agency staff</li> <li>implementing a more robust budget-setting approach, including public budget engagement</li> </ul> <p>SR1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring that risks to financial resilience are appropriately highlighted in financial plans, including the section 25 report</li> <li>ensuring that financial plans are sufficient to bridge all forecast budget gaps and replenish reserves</li> <li>ensuring that financial plans are linked to the Council's corporate priorities as set out in its new Corporate Plan</li> </ul>	2023/24	Discussed on pages 22 and 23.	Limited progress made	Statutory recommendation retained

# Follow up of 2023/24 Statutory recommendations

Prior Recommendation	Raised	Progress	Current status	Further action
<p>The Council should develop and implement the transformation programme at scale and pace to address the significant structural budget deficit. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring it has effective overview and control of its transformation programme which is sufficiently focused on budget savings.</li> <li>ensuring there is sufficient capacity and skills in the organisation to effectively deliver the required savings, including change management and PMO.</li> </ul> <p><b>SR2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring the reprioritisation of the programme includes a review of both discretionary spending and the levels at which statutory services are provided and is informed by appropriate stakeholder consultation</li> <li>improving programme management to include officer as well as member assurance boards.</li> <li>developing robust and transparent monitoring arrangements for benefits realisation and tracking savings as a whole programme.</li> <li>ensuring the programme has a risk and issues log that the PMO updates and uses regularly.</li> </ul>	2023/24	Discussed on pages 24 and 25.	Limited progress made	Statutory recommendation retained

# Follow up of 2023/24 Key recommendations

	Prior Recommendation	Raised	Progress	Current status	Further action
KR1	The Council should put sufficient plans in place to address its escalating forecast DSG deficit, while delivering the necessary improvements to its SEND services. The Council's plans should ensure it has appropriate contingency in place if the Government's statutory override is not extended in March 2026.	2023/24	DBV projections show the Council's DSG deficit rising from £2.9m in 2023 to £33.9m by 2028 and even with mitigations the deficit is expected to be £22.1m. Given the Council's reserves of £5.149m lifting of the statutory override in March 2028 would be very serious for financial sustainability.	Limited progress made	Key recommendation revised.
KR2	The Council needs to significantly improve its risk strategy, improve the CRR and ensure officers and members are reviewing strategic and directorate risks at least quarterly and ensuring risk is adequately considered in financial reporting.	2023/24	The Council drafted a new risk management policy, aligned with the Government's Orange Book, which was agreed by the Executive in July 2025. A new CRR format will now be developed and reported quarterly to the Executive and to Audit and Governance Board.	The Council has progressed our recommendation and we make a revised improvement recommendation.	Yes, improvement recommendation made to improve risk reporting and quantify risk in the budget.
KR3	The Council needs to urgently update its arrangements for business continuity and disaster recovery planning.	2023/24	The Council did make progress to address this weakness, but arrangements remain untested in 2025/26 with some IT systems yet to have their security identified.	Partial progress made	Key recommendation retained.

# Follow up of 2023/24 Statutory and Key recommendations

Prior Recommendation	Raised	Progress	Current status	Further action
<p><b>KR4</b> The Council needs to improve its performance management arrangements by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establishing a golden thread for the Council, by improving the performance management framework at corporate and service levels linking outcomes to expected annual measures to track success and reporting these to the public.</li> <li>agreeing performance outcomes, that can be measured, at least annually as part of the new performance management framework.</li> <li>improving performance reporting to include benchmarking with ‘nearest neighbours’ data where possible;</li> <li>integrating performance, risk and finance reporting to drive improvement and sharing these reports quarterly with the Executive Board.</li> <li>ensuring consistency across directorates regarding the reporting of corporate performance data to enable outcomes to be tracked.</li> </ul>	2023/24	<p>We have found no evidence of a golden thread or any public-facing annual report. However, there is a corporate plan for 2024/29. In 2024/25 there was no quarterly reporting aligned to corporate priorities and directorate reporting was still not being reported consistently each quarter as we identified in 2023/24. We have not seen a new performance framework to join up the corporate plan with directorate and service performance and any evidence of benchmarking to national or nearest neighbours in the directorate reports. In 2024/25 performance risk and finance reporting was still not integrated as we would expect to see.</p>	Limited progress made	Key recommendation retained.

# Follow up of 2023/24 Statutory and Key recommendations

	Prior Recommendation	Raised	Progress	Current status	Further action
KR5	<p>The Council needs to significantly improve its services for children and young people by putting in place arrangements to improve its SEND services working with health partners and by putting in place, and delivering, an improvement plan to address the wider children's services inspection findings.</p>	2023/24	<p>In February 2025, the Secretary of State was satisfied there was some improvement, but the Council was failing to perform to an adequate standard. On 2 June 2025 Ofsted published a letter to the Council following an Ofsted monitoring visit in April 2025. It found evidence of improvement but identified more improvement is needed. On 15 July 2024, the Children, Young, People's and Families Policy and Performance Board received a report on SEND improvement. The SEND Priority Action Plan mandates the production of 4 new or revised strategies. In June 2025, the first three of these strategies were progressing. We conclude there was a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for children in 2024/25 which continued in 2025/26.</p>	Partially implemented	Key recommendation retained.

# 07 Appendices



# Appendix A: Responsibilities of the Council

Public bodies spending taxpayers' money are accountable for their stewardship of the resources entrusted to them. They should account properly for their use of resources and manage themselves well so that the public can be confident.

Financial statements are the main way in which local public bodies account for how they use their resources. Local public bodies are required to prepare and publish financial statements setting out their financial performance for the year. To do this, bodies need to maintain proper accounting records and ensure they have effective systems of internal control.

All local public bodies are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness from their resources. This includes taking properly informed decisions and managing key operational and financial risks so that they can deliver their objectives and safeguard public money. Local public bodies report on their arrangements, and the effectiveness with which the arrangements are operating, as part of their annual governance statement.

The Council's Chief Finance Officer is responsible for preparing the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they determine necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

The Chief Finance Officer is required to comply with CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom. In preparing the financial statements, the Chief Financial Officer is responsible for assessing the Council's ability to continue as a going concern and use the going concern basis of accounting unless there is an intention by government that the services provided by the Council will no longer be provided.

The Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.



# Appendix B: Value for Money Auditor responsibilities

Our work is risk-based and focused on providing a commentary assessment of the Council’s Value for Money arrangements

## Phase 1 – Planning and initial risk assessment

As part of our planning, we assess our knowledge of the Council’s arrangements and whether we consider there are any indications of risks of significant weakness. This is done against each of the reporting criteria and continues throughout the reporting period.

## Phase 2 – Additional risk-based procedures and evaluation

Where we identify risks of significant weakness in arrangements, we will undertake further work to understand whether there are significant weaknesses. We use auditor’s professional judgement in assessing whether there is a significant weakness in arrangements and ensure that we consider any further guidance issued by the NAO.

## Phase 3 – Reporting our commentary and recommendations

The Code requires us to provide a commentary on your arrangements which is detailed within this report. Where we identify weaknesses in arrangements we raise recommendations.



### A range of different recommendations can be raised by the Council’s auditors as follows:

**Statutory recommendations** – recommendations to the Council under Section 24 (Schedule 7) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

**Key recommendations** – the actions which should be taken by the Council where significant weaknesses are identified within arrangements.

**Improvement recommendations** – actions which are not a result of us identifying significant weaknesses in the Council’s arrangements, but which if not addressed could increase the risk of a significant weakness in the future.

## Information that informs our ongoing risk assessment

Cumulative knowledge of arrangements from the prior year	Key performance and risk management information reported to the Executive or full Council
Interviews and discussions with key stakeholders	External review such as by the LGA, CIPFA, or Local Government Ombudsman
Progress with implementing recommendations	Regulatory inspections such as from Ofsted and CQC
Findings from our opinion audit	Annual Governance Statement including the Head of Internal Audit annual opinion

# Appendix C: Follow up of 2023/24 improvement recommendations

	Prior Recommendation	Raised	Progress	Current position	Further action
IR1	<p>The Council needs to enhance its internal audit arrangements by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>putting in place an audit manual which is a core part of the Council's control process.</li> <li>making specific linkages between the audit plan and the Council's significant risks and strategic objectives.</li> <li>retaining planning records to demonstrate these linkages.</li> <li>adapting the Code of Ethics and Declarations of Interest Statement to include a conflict-of-interest management strategy and manager sign-off.</li> </ul>	2023/24	<p>In June 2025, the audit manual was still not complete. Links are made to the CRR in the audit plan for 2025/26. We expect internal audit reports to be reported as part a in a transparent manner. Audit working papers are stored in a database. In March 2025, the Audit and Governance Board received an internal audit progress report. This does not provide members with reasons why some audits are limited and the recommendations being made to address that together with the timescale as we would expect to see. The Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 includes the Head of Internal Audit Opinion for 2023/24 not 2024/25 as we would expect to see. The AGS does not identify the statutory or key recommendations we made in 2023/24 or progress to address these as we would expect to see. We make a revised improvement recommendation relating to internal audit.</p>	Partially implemented	Revised improvement recommendation made
IR2	<p>The Council needs to update its Whistleblowing Policy and ensure its subject to annual reviews. It also needs to ensure it is understood and officers follow the correct processes.</p>	2023/24	<p>The Council's whistleblowing arrangements are reviewed annually as part of the review of the Constitution, and changes were made to the Whistleblowing Policy during the 2024 review. It is published on the Council's website and intranet, ensuring it is easily accessible</p>	Recommendation implemented	Improvement recommendation closed

# Appendix C: Follow up of 2023/24 improvement recommendations

	Prior Recommendation	Raised	Progress	Current position	Further action
IR3	The Council needs to review its overview and scrutiny arrangements to provide earlier engagement of scrutiny to enhance decision-making and ensure scrutiny receive reports for consideration to provide an opportunity for challenge.	2023/24	In September 2024, the LGA CPC report said the Council needs to support Policy and Performance Boards to have greater impact. The Council has no dedicated scrutiny officers as we would expect to see. In June 2025, the Council was working with the LGA to improve scrutiny and reshape its committees. In June 2025, the Corporate PPB received a spending update for January 2025 which is too late.	Limited progress	Improvement recommendation retained
IR4	The Council should enhance the effectiveness of its Audit and Governance Committee by:  appointing independent members to provide expertise in areas like transformation.  reviewing its terms of reference to align with the CIPFA 2022 Code of Practice on Audit and Governance Boards.  ensuring procurement waivers are reported on an annual basis. and formalising reporting on standards investigations.	2023/24	We note on 16 May 2025 full Council agreed to the Audit and Governance Board having an independent member, but recruitment is yet to take place at the time of this audit.  Procurement waivers were taken to Audit and Governance Board in June 2025 for 2024/25.	Partially implemented	Revised improvement recommendation made

# Appendix C: Follow up of 2023/24 improvement recommendations

	Prior Recommendation	Raised	Progress	Current position	Further action
IR5	The Council needs to improve its arrangements for member and officer declarations of interest by updating member and officer declarations annually at the start of each year.	2023/24	The Council still has no single register of member interests as we would expect to see, and a sample of member interests were out of date.	Limited progress made	Improvement recommendation retained
IR6	The Council needs to improve its contract management arrangements by putting in place formal contract management review processes and ensuring performance and financial management are including in contract review meetings and are formally documented.	2023/24	The Council has improved contract management in children’s services. However, no formal contract meetings are held with Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority (MRWA) and financial performance is not discussed informally. In 2024/25 the MRWA was updating the IAA with Halton to reflect the waste changes. This did not happen by November 2024 as planned and was not agreed by August 2025.	Partially implemented	Revised improvement recommendation made

# Appendix D: Glossary of terms

Term	Explanation
AAR	Auditor's Annual Report
AGS	Annual Governance Statement
AGS	Annual Governance Statement
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, a UK based professional body for accountants who work in the public sector.
CPC	Corporate Peer Challenge
CPC	Corporate Peer Challenge
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CRR	Corporate risk register
CRR	Corporate risk register
DBV	The Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND programme aims to support Councils and their local area partners to improve the delivery of SEND services for children and young people while working towards financial sustainability.
DFE	Government Department for Education

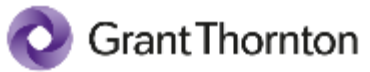
# Appendix D: Glossary of terms

Term	Explanation
DSG	Dedicated schools grant is a ring-fenced grant provided by the UK government to local authorities to fund education services. It has four blocks, one of these is high needs and supports children with special educational needs and disabilities.
EFS	Exceptional Financial Support offered by MHCLG for councils needing financial support. It is provided through capitalisation directions, which allow councils to treat revenue costs as capital—enabling them to borrow or use capital receipts to cover costs
IAA	Inter Authority Agreement
IR	Improvement recommendation
KR	Key recommendation
LASAAC	Local Authority (Scotland) Accounts Advisory Committee
LGA	The Local Government Association is the national membership body for local authorities in England and Wales
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
MRWA	Merseyside Waste and Recycling Authority

# Appendix D: Glossary of terms

Term	Explanation
MTFP/S	Medium-term financial plan/strategy
NAO	National Audit Office
PMO	Programme Management Office
PPB	Policy, Performance Board
S25	Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council's Chief Finance / Section 151 officer to report to Full Council about the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of reserves when determining their budget and level of Council Tax.
S151	The Council's statutory Chief Finance Officer
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SR	Statutory recommendation





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**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 11 September 2025

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Director of Finance

**PORTFOLIO:** Corporate Services

**SUBJECT:** 2025/26 Councilwide Spending as at 31 July 2025

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

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To report the Council's overall revenue net spend position as at 31 July 2025 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 3;**
- (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 3.24 and incorporated within Appendix 4;**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **Revenue Spending**

3.1 Appendix 1 presents a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 31 July 2025 and Appendix 2 provides detailed figures for each individual Department. In overall terms, net Council spending as at 31 July 2025 is £1.629m over budget. The outturn forecast for the year estimates that net spending will be over budget by £5.572m if no corrective action is taken. This compares with the position at the end of May 2025 where forecast spend for the year was estimated to be £6.185m over budget.

- 3.2 The improved position on the forecast outturn from that reported at the end of May 2025 can be linked across a number of departments, there are though, two departments where the reported position is significantly changed from previously reported. Adult Social Care (excl Care Homes and Community Care) is forecasting a £0.698m overspend against budget, mainly as a result of higher than forecast staffing costs. There is a significant improvement against Planning & Transportation which is now forecasting an underspend position against budget of £0.266m (as at May 2025 the forecast was a net overspend of £0.672m). This can be attributed to cessation of revenue spend for programmed works and higher forecast of income against fees and charges.
- 3.3 The forecast position remains a matter of great concern and action to reduce net spend must be taken immediately. Without action being taken the Council will not be in a position to provide a balanced budget by financial year-end and will further add to borrowings which will need to be taken through Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).
- 3.4 As part of the action to ensure spend for the year remains within budget, recovery meetings have been put into action where directorate leads will provide action points on how they aim to keep net spend within the approved budget.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 Consistent with those councils that 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. No date has yet been fixed for the assessment
- 3.7 Council approved the annual budget of £183.052m on 05 March 2025, in doing so they agreed to the use of EFS totalling £29.385m. As a minimum the Council must aspire to ensure that spend for the year remains within the approved budget to ensure the provisional capitalisation direction is not breached.
- 3.8 The cost of EFS is significant over the long term for the Council, for every £1m borrowing undertaken it is estimated will cost the Council approximately £100k over each of the next 20 years. It is imperative that action is taken now to reduce the level of planned spend over the remainder of the year and that approved saving proposals are implemented with immediate effect

- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 There are continued demand pressures on the budget which are above growth levels provided in the 2025/26 budget, these are more notable against adults community care and home to school transport. Levels of demand covering children in care appear to be under control for the first four months of the year, although still too high for an authority the size of Halton. Further information is provided within the report on the main budgetary pressure areas.
- 3.12 In setting the 2025/26 budget, inflation of 2% was provided for the pay award. The pay award has been agreed at 3.2%, therefore budgetary growth for the pay award is insufficient, it is currently forecast the additional cost of the 3.2% pay offer will add approximately £1m to the Council's running cost for the year. This additional cost is included within the reported forecast position for the year. Backdated pay will be paid during August 2025.
- 3.13 Another major factor in achieving a balanced budget position for the year is that all approved savings are fully achieved to the agreed levels. In total, savings of £7.225m were agreed for the current year, Appendix 3 provides detail on progress against the approved savings. As per Appendix 3, savings have been RAG rated to inform on progress, 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	1,500	280
Finance	0	150	40
Legal	6	0	0
Children & Family Services	0	1,900	22
Education, Inclusion and Provision	0	300	0
Community and Greenspaces	282	0	0
Economy, Enterprise and Property	0	100	0
Planning & Transportation	0	0	100
Public Health	45	0	0
Corporate	0	2,200	200
<b>Totals</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>6,150</b>	<b>642</b>

- 3.14 The use and cost of agency staff continues to be one of the main contributing factors to the overspend position for the year. This is mostly evident within the Children & Families Department and the Council's in-house Care Homes. Initiatives and support from the Transformation Programme are ongoing to reduce reliance upon agency staff.
- 3.15 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	Total 2025/26 To Date	As at 31 March 2025
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adult Social Care	955	1,687	2,642	6,035
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	130	145	275	810
Children & Family Services	574	739	1,313	5,220
Community & Greenspace	71	59	130	447
Economy, Enterprise & Property	60	77	137	417
Education, Inclusion & Provision	54	72	126	295
Finance	3	0	3	114
Legal & Democratic Services	63	59	122	881
Planning & Transportation	2	0	2	210
Public Health & Public Protection	0	0	0	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,912</b>	<b>2,838</b>	<b>4,750</b>	<b>14,451</b>

### Revenue - Operational Spending

- 3.16 Operational net spending for the first four months of the year is higher than the budget to date by £1.629m. Based on current forecasts it is estimated net spend will be over budget for the year by £5.572m if no further corrective action is taken.
- 3.17 Within the overall budget forecast position for the period, the key budget pressure areas are as follows;

(i) **Children and Families Department**

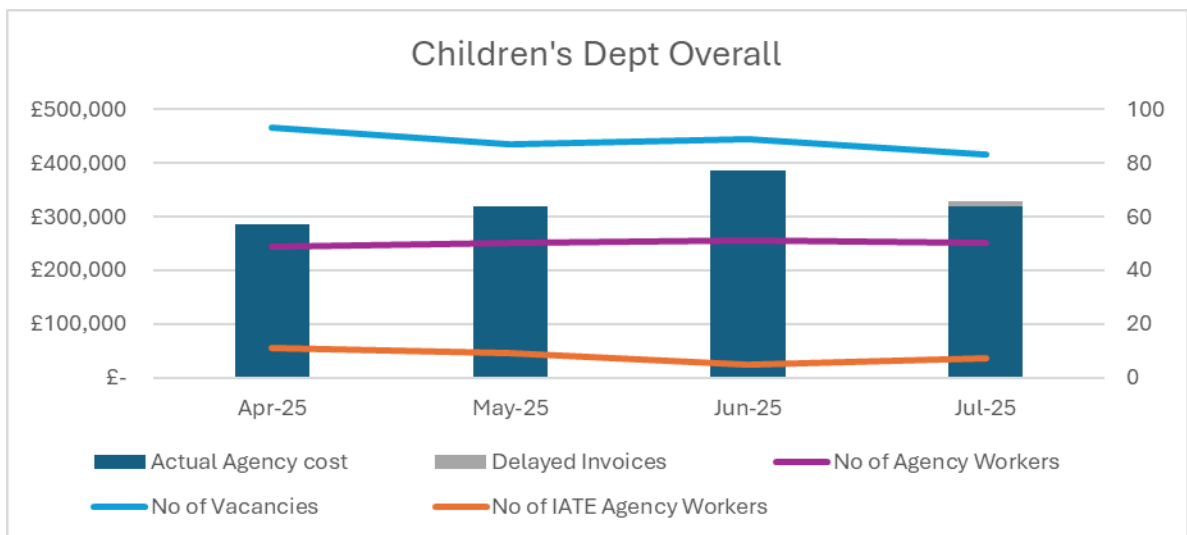
The net departmental outturn position is estimated to be over budget profile at the end of financial year 2025/26 by £2.190m with the majority relating to Social Care Services. Since last reported at 31 May 2025 there has been a reduction in overspend of £0.197m.

Employee costs are forecast to be over budget profile by the end of financial year 2025/26 by £1.204m this is a reduction of £0.245m since last reported on 31 May 2025. The reduction mainly relates to

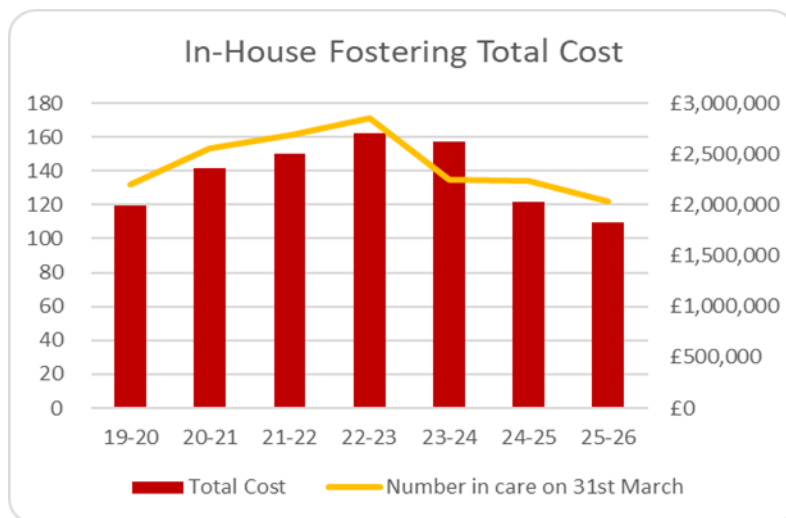
vacant posts that remain unfilled that are not being covered by agency and a slight increase in staffing budget.

The level of agency has remained consistent since April across the service. There is an expectation that a number of agency staff are due to convert to Halton BC employees in the coming months and the recruitment of newly qualified social workers should reduce the level of agency reliance. Forecasts will be updated as and when to reflect the changes in staffing.

The chart below demonstrates agency costs that cover April to July 2025, the number of agency staff that the Council have received an invoice for within each period, the number of vacancies across the department and the number of staff that are currently in addition to the establishment (IATE).

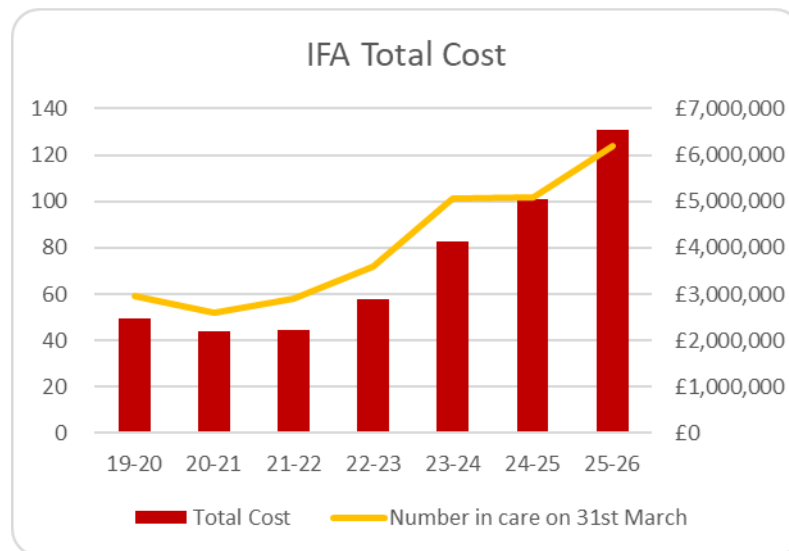


Inhouse fostering placements is estimated to be £0.493m under budget profile for financial year 2025/26.



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 Agency (IFA) 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 £1.070m.

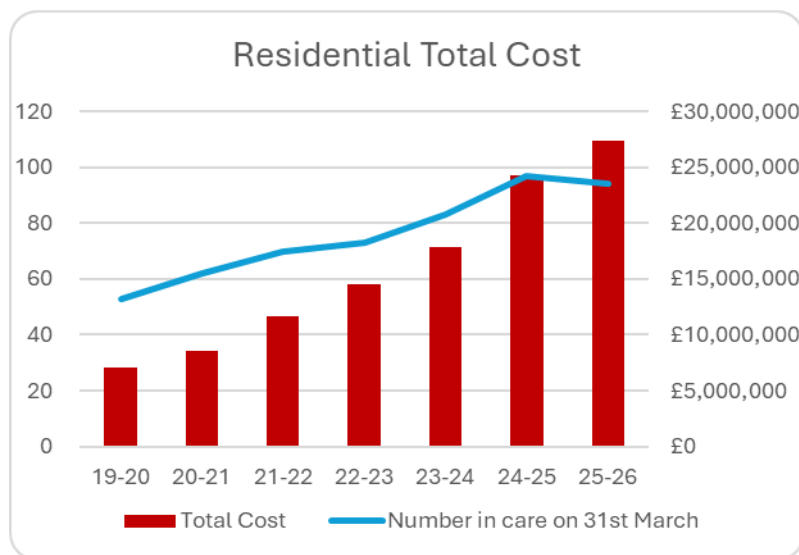


Out of Borough Residential Care continues to be a budget pressure for the Children and Families Department as the costs of residential care have continue to rise year on year. The numbers of young people in residential placements remains high and the cost of placements is rising significantly year-on year.

Residential care costs are forecast to be over budget profile by £0.061m, this is an increase in forecast overspend since last reported of £0.099m. This is due to not receiving sufficient funding relating to accommodation costs for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) and Care Leavers as well as a number of young people that have been placed within remand provision.

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 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-Jul-25	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
Residential	£1000 - £3000	4	369,378
Residential	£3001 - £5000	28	6,674,247
Residential	£5001 - £7000	20	6,451,576
Residential	£7001 - £15982	19	10,713,790
Secure	£6397 - £8137		
Leaving Care	£443 - £7175	17	2,465,705
Parent & Child	£2000 - £5500	6	694,683
<b>Total:</b>		<b>94</b>	<b>27,369,380</b>

(ii) **Adult Social Care Directorate**

**Community Care**

The net spend position for the community care budget at the end of July 2025 is currently £0.876m over the available budget and the year end forecast is forecast to show net spend to be £2.627m over the annual budget.

This forecast is as things stand at the moment assuming no material changes, apart from increased demand of 4.9% and the agreed fee increase of 8% with care providers. However there is a risk that the forecast could be significantly more as the ICB carry out a formal “turnaround” reviewing all NHS spend which may impact on the community care budget and could result in more challenges to social care funding requests.

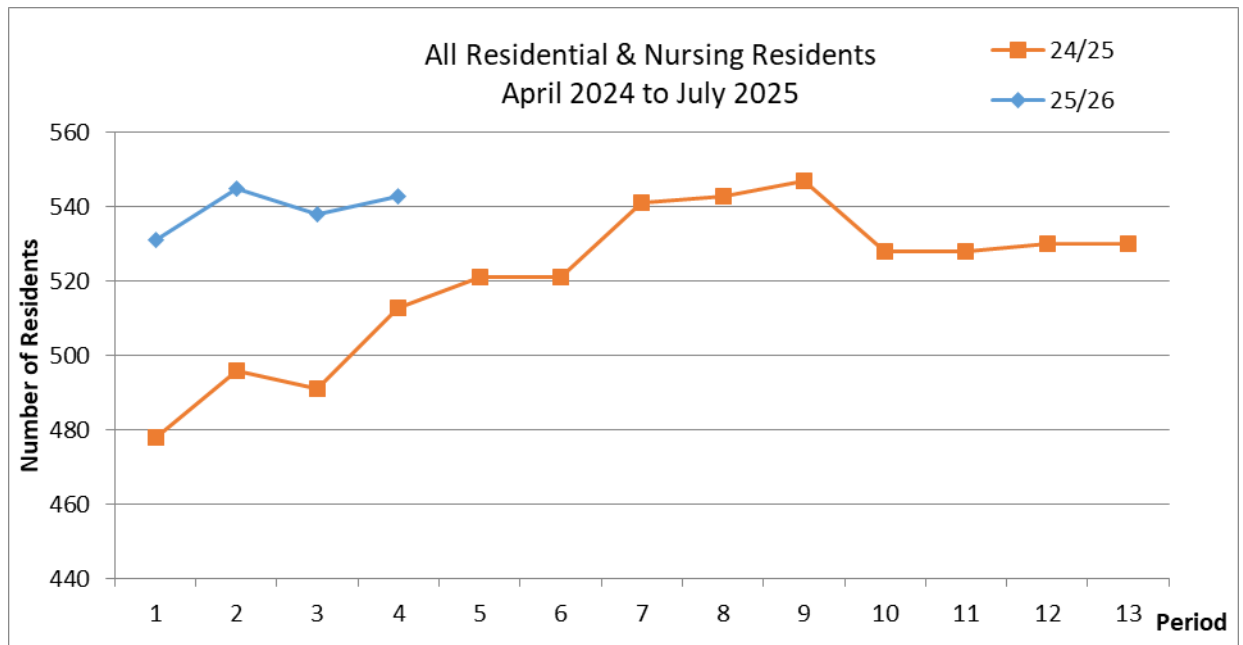
To mitigate this financial risk a number of actions are being considered for implementation to reduce costs and help bring spend back in line with budget. These are detailed below:

- Reduction of 1 to 1 packages of care if health’s responsibility
- Review 15 minutes packages of domiciliary care to identify medicine prompts which are health’s financial responsibility
- Ensure assessments carried out on discharge from hospital are complete and appropriate
- Maximise internal care home capacity

Residential & Nursing Care

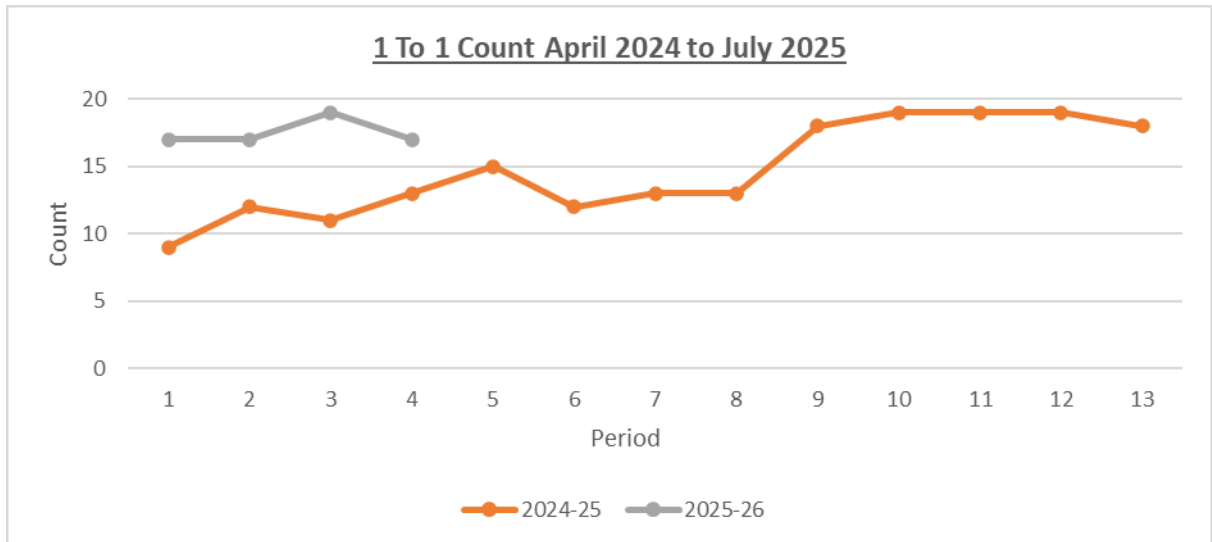
There are currently 543 residents in external residential/nursing care as at the end of July 2025 compared to 530 at the end of 2024/25, an increase of 2.45%. Compared to the 2024/25 average of 520 this is an increase of 4.4%. The average cost of a package of care is currently £869.21 compared to £850.24 at the end of 2024/25 an increase of 2.2%. Supplementary invoice payments so far amount to £0.205m.

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



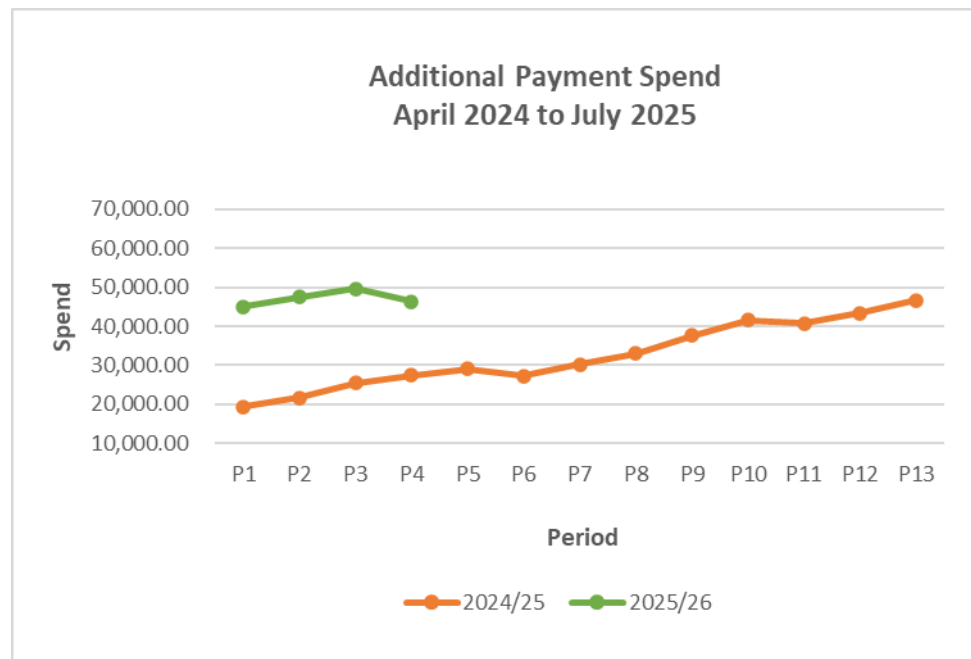
Payments for 1 to 1 support continue to exert pressure on the budget. These are generally to mitigate the risk from falls particularly on discharge from hospital. The full year cost for 2024/25 was £837,882.

The graph below shows the count of service users receiving 1 to 1 care by period. Currently there are 17 compared to 13 at the same point last year. This is an increase of 30%, although numbers have decreased from Period 3 to 4 as packages are being reviewed.



Additional payments to providers rose sharply throughout 2024/25, both in and out of the borough. This is where the care home charge an additional amount on top of the contracted bed rate. The cost of this for 2024/25 was £423,894.

The graph below illustrates the cost of additional payments by period. This clearly shows a steady increase in numbers and costs for 25/26. The spend up to Period 4 2025/26 is £188,542.83. If numbers and costs remain the same the forecast spend for the year will be approximately £0.605m.

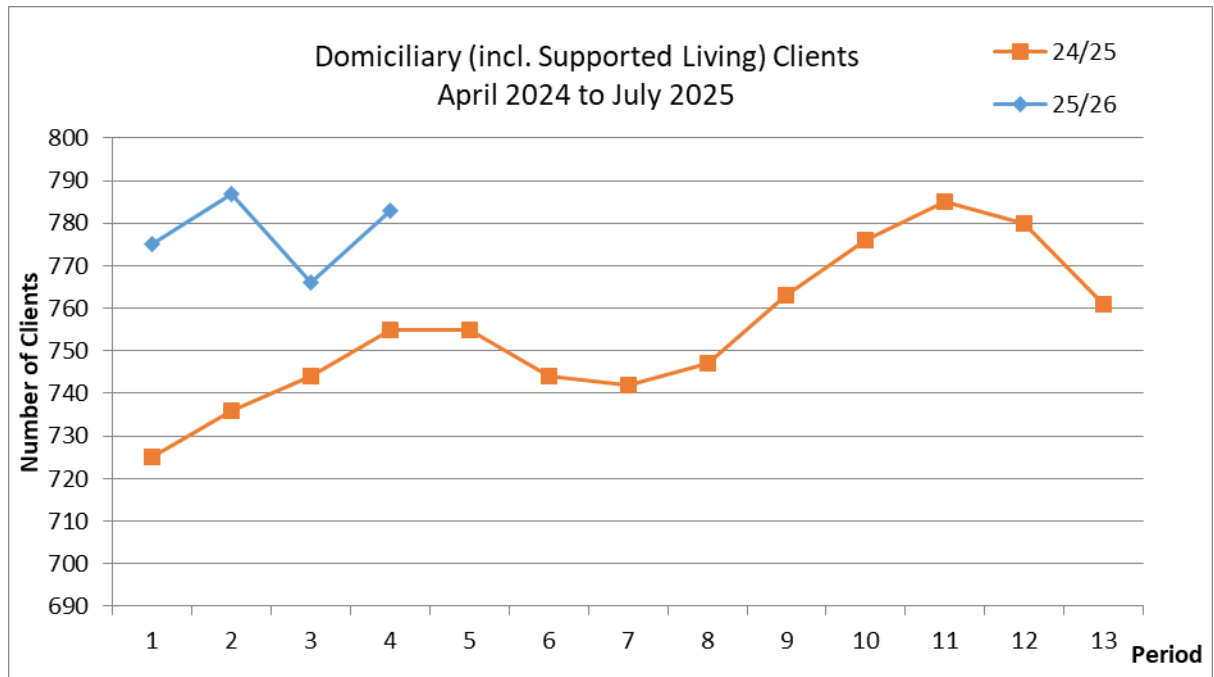


**Domiciliary Care & Supported Living**

As at July there are 783 service users receiving a package of care at home, compared to the average in 2024/25 of 754, an increase of 3.8%. However compared with July 2024 the increase is 3.7%. The average

cost of a package of care is currently £519.79 compared with £450.64 in 2024/25 an increase of 15.3%.

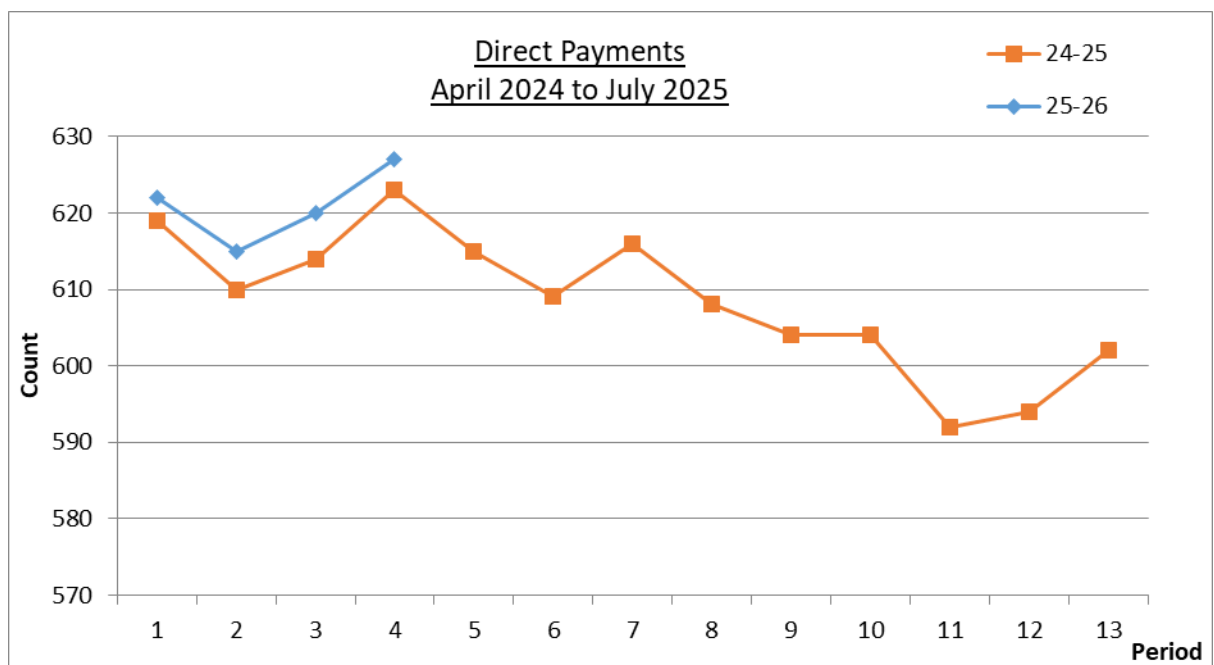
The graph below illustrates the demand for the service from April 2024 to July 2025.



Direct Payments

The average number of clients who received a Direct Payment (DP) in Period 4 was 627 compared with 622 in Period 1, a very small increase. The average cost of a package of care has decreased from £571.26 to £509.29, a reduction of 10.8%.

The graph below shows movement throughout the year.



### **Care Homes**

Spend for the first four months of the 2025/26 financial year to 31 July is £0.330m above profile, with an estimated spend above budget for the year of £0.832m. This primarily relates to unbudgeted agency staffing costs.

Employee related expenditure is over budget profile at the end of July 2025 by £0.234m, with the expected outturn at the end of financial year being £0.713m over budget. Projections take into account agency spending patterns over the previous 3 financial years.

Recruitment of staff is a continued pressure across the care homes. There remains a high number of staff vacancies across the care homes. A proactive rolling recruitment exercise is ongoing within the care homes and is supported by HR.

Due to pressures with recruitment and retention in the sector, heavy reliance is being placed on overtime and expensive agency staff to support the care homes. At the end of July 2025 total agency spend across the care homes reached £1.675m, the cost of this has partially been offset by staff vacancies.

### **Adult Social Care (excluding Care Homes and Community Care)**

Net department expenditure, is currently £0.153m over budget profile at the end of the fourth period of the financial year. 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 above the annual budget by £0.706m. Factors relating to the projected overspend include;

Unbudgeted agency costs in respect of covering vacant posts, particularly in terms of front-line Care Management and Mental Health Team posts. Due to ongoing and increase in vacancies, there has been an increase in agency staff use, by 6 additional agency staff members since May 2025, with the continued use of these agency staff members being forecasted until the end of the financial year.

Agency expenditure across the department as a whole at the end of July 2025 stood at £0.686m, with a full-year spend of £1.742m projected. This is partially offset by a forecasted underspend on the staffing budget of £1.036m.

An unbudgeted market supplement has been awarded to social workers across the division with spend at the end of July 2025 being £0.059m, a full year spend of £0.177m is forecasted.

**(iii) Education, Inclusion and Provision**

Net departmental expenditure is £0.359m over budget at the end of July, based on available information. The forecast outturn for 2025/26 is currently an overspend against budget of £1.184m.

Schools Transport is the main budget 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.

The table below illustrates the split between the two areas, and how each areas spend compares to the budget.

2025-26 as at July-25					
Area	Number of Users	Budget £000	Projected Spend £000	Variance £000	Average Cost per User
In Borough	476	1857	2062	(205)	£3,806.54
Out of Borough	147	1214	1546	(332)	£9,137.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>3071</b>	<b>3608</b>	<b>(537)</b>	

Note the above table excludes efficiency savings of £0.300m approved for the 2025/26 budget.

Inter Authority income is projected to underachieve its target by £0.211m. This is due to an underachievement of income within the Integrated Youth Support Services & Commissioning Division for a shared service.

**(iv) Corporate and Democracy**

The Corporate & Democracy budget is currently forecasting an underspend against budget of £1.869m at the end of the financial year, there are a number of reasons for this.

Included within the budget are council wide saving proposals of £2.6m, it is currently estimated that only £0.3m of these savings will

be achieved by 31 March 2026. Further details of the agreed savings are included at Appendix 3.

The additional cost of the pay award over the approved budget is estimated to cost the Council an additional £1m in the current financial year. This estimate has been included within Corporate and Democracy until the pay award is implemented.

Contingency of £3.688m is included and assumed will not be called upon (for new spend) through to 31 March 2026. The high level of contingency was included within the budget to allow for the gradual reduction in agency costs, demand and general cost pressures.

### **Collection Fund**

- 3.18 The council tax collection rate through to the end of July 2025 is 36.16% which is 0.07% 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 and attachment to earnings/benefits to secure debts. £1.268m has so far been collected this year in relation to previous years' debt.

- 3.19 Business rate collection through to the end of July 2025 is 40.69% which is 0.9% lower than the collection rate at the same point last year.

£0.345m has so far been collected this year in relation to previous years' debt.

### **Review of Reserves**

- 3.20 As at 31 July 2025 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 insufficient and provides little to cover unforeseen costs. Within the Medium Term Financial Strategy, growth to reserves will be included at a rate of £2m per year.

- 3.21 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

- 3.22 A summary breakdown of the Council's reserves is presented in the table below, showing the balance of reserves as at 31 July 2025.

<b>Summary of General and Earmarked Reserves</b>	
<b>Reserve</b>	<b>Reserve Value £m</b>
<b>Corporate:</b>	
General Fund	5.149
Capital Reserve	0.398
Insurance Reserve	0.849
<b>Specific Projects:</b>	
Adult Social Care	0.710
Fleet Replacement	0.454
Highways Feasibility Costs	0.102
Local Development Framework	0.538
Community & Environment	0.542
Mersey Valley Golf Club	0.480
Mersey Gateway	33.542
CCLA Property Fund	0.263
Various Other	0.153
<b>Grants:</b>	
Building Schools for the Future	6.529
Public Health	1.468
Supporting Families Performance Payments	0.204
Children's & Education	1.188
Domestic Abuse	0.915
Enterprise & Employment	0.782
Food Waste Collection	0.237
Mersey Gateway Environmental Trust	0.492
Various Other	0.156
<b>Total Earmarked Reserves</b>	<b>55.151</b>

- 3.23 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

- 3.24 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 4 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:



- i. Grants - Disabled Facilities
- ii. Stair Lifts
- iii. Joint Funding RSL Adaptations
- iv. Madeline McKenna Residential Home
- v. St Lukes Residential Home
- vi. Halton Leisure Centre
- vii. Landfill Tax Credit Schemes
- viii. Spike Island / Wigg Island
- ix. Cemetery Infrastructure work
- x. Stadium Public Address System
- xi. Town Deal
- xii. Astmoor Masterplan
- xiii. ATF4 - Widnes Town Centre Accessibility
- xiv. A56 Reconstruction
- xv. Pot Hole Funding
- xvi. CRSTS
- xvii. Risk Management
- xviii. Fleet Replacements
- xix. Early Land Acquisition Mersey Gateway

3.25 Capital spending at 31 July 2025 totalled £11.4m, which represents 20.1% of the total Capital Programme of £56.5m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years).

#### **4.0 CONCLUSIONS**

4.1 As at 31 July 2025, net revenue spend is forecast to be £5.572m over the budget to date despite significant levels of growth being included within the budget.

4.2 Urgent corrective should be taken as soon as possible across all Council services to identify spend reductions and ensure that agreed savings are fully implemented in a timely manner.

4.3 Departments should ensure that all spending continues to be limited to what is absolutely essential throughout the remainder of the year, to ensure that the forecast outturn overspend is minimised as far as possible and future spending is brought in line with budget.

#### **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. However, 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 5.

**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 July 2025

APPENDIX 1

Directorate / Department	Annual Budget £'000	Budget To Date £'000	Actual To Date £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	July 2025 Forecast Outturn (o'spend) £'000
Adult Social Care	24,522	7,812	7,965	(153)	(698)
Care Homes`	7,932	2,658	2,988	(330)	(832)
Community Care	27,968	8,515	9,391	(876)	(2,627)
Complex Care Pool	13,188	312	309	3	2
<b>Adults Directorate</b>	<b>73,610</b>	<b>19,297</b>	<b>20,653</b>	<b>(1,356)</b>	<b>(4,155)</b>
Finance	5,573	2,687	2,797	(110)	(331)
Legal & Democratic Services	297	64	70	(6)	(18)
ICT & Support Services	197	1,260	1,221	39	117
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	1,113	577	586	(9)	(26)
<b>Chief Executives Directorate</b>	<b>7,180</b>	<b>4,588</b>	<b>4,674</b>	<b>(86)</b>	<b>(258)</b>
Children & Families	53,959	13,823	14,703	(880)	(2,190)
Education, Inclusion & Provision	12,067	2,896	3,255	(359)	(1,184)
<b>Children's Directorate</b>	<b>66,026</b>	<b>16,719</b>	<b>17,958</b>	<b>(1,239)</b>	<b>(3,374)</b>
Community & Greenspace	23,711	5,651	5,690	(39)	(124)
Economy, Enterprise & Property	2,464	940	928	12	178
Planning & Transportation	9,256	1,939	1,817	122	266
<b>Environment &amp; Regeneration Directorate</b>	<b>35,431</b>	<b>8,530</b>	<b>8,435</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>320</b>
Corporate & Democracy	-1,076	2,704	1,754	950	1,869
Public Health Directorate	1,881	-2,583	-2,590	7	26
<b>Total Operational Net Spend</b>	<b>183,052</b>	<b>49,255</b>	<b>50,884</b>	<b>(1,629)</b>	<b>(5,572)</b>



## Adult Social Care

## APPENDIX 2

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	18,229	6,076	5,632	444	1,036
Agency- Covering Vacancies	0	0	686	(686)	(1,742)
Premises	498	215	185	30	85
Supplies & Services	712	273	363	(90)	(69)
Aids & Adaptations	37	12	10	2	8
Transport	341	114	106	8	22
Food & Drink Provisions	228	76	49	27	91
Supported Accommodation and Services	1,408	469	387	82	146
Emergency Duty Team	157	39	33	6	(4)
Transfer To Reserves	282	0	0	0	0
Contracts & SLAs	1,043	342	322	20	56
<u>Housing Solutions Grant Funded Schemes</u>					
Homelessness Prevention	548	246	227	19	0
Rough Sleepers Initiative	167	56	36	20	0
Trailblazer	15	5	5	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>23,665</b>	<b>7,923</b>	<b>8,041</b>	<b>(118)</b>	<b>(371)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-1,044	-348	-191	(157)	(338)
Sales & Rents Income	-538	-240	-243	3	7
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-2,182	-612	-729	117	23
Capital Salaries	-117	-29	-29	0	0
Housing Schemes Income	-783	-727	-727	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-4,664</b>	<b>-1,956</b>	<b>-1,919</b>	<b>(37)</b>	<b>(308)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>19,001</b>	<b>5,967</b>	<b>6,122</b>	<b>(155)</b>	<b>(679)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	789	263	263	0	0
Transport	792	264	271	(7)	(19)
Central Support	4,039	1,346	1,346	0	0
Asset Rental Support	13	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-112	-28	-37	9	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>5,521</b>	<b>1,845</b>	<b>1,843</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-19</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>24,522</b>	<b>7,812</b>	<b>7,965</b>	<b>(153)</b>	<b>(698)</b>

## Care Homes

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
<b><u>Madeline Mckenna</u></b>					
Employees	781	261	253	8	3
Other Premises	90	25	24	1	12
Supplies & Services	26	7	9	(2)	(7)
Food Provison	51	13	18	(5)	(5)
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-127	-42	-33	(9)	0
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-34	-11	-11	0	6
<b>Total Madeline Mckenna Expenditure</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>(7)</b>	<b>9</b>
<b><u>Millbrow</u></b>					
Employees	2,423	807	398	409	1,147
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	377	(377)	(1,228)
Other Premises	117	34	46	(12)	(23)
Supplies & Services	72	21	22	(1)	(5)
Food Provison	81	20	28	(8)	(9)
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-13	-4	0	(4)	(9)
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-885	-295	-220	(75)	(180)
<b>Total Millbrow Expenditure</b>	<b>1,795</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>(68)</b>	<b>(307)</b>
<b><u>St Luke's</u></b>					
Employees	3,411	1,137	570	567	1,566
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	857	(857)	(2,234)
Other Premises	156	45	59	(14)	(52)
Supplies & Services	67	19	25	(6)	(11)
Food Provison	128	42	53	(11)	(29)
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-152	-50	-15	(35)	(9)
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-896	-298	-417	119	375
<b>Total St Luke's Expenditure</b>	<b>2,714</b>	<b>895</b>	<b>1,132</b>	<b>(237)</b>	<b>(394)</b>
<b><u>St Patrick's</u></b>					
Employees	2,113	704	297	407	787
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	441	(441)	(895)
Other Premises	144	41	48	(7)	(24)
Supplies & Services	67	20	24	(4)	2
Food Provison	127	42	37	5	10
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-99	-33	-5	(28)	(93)
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-766	-186	-186	0	(68)
<b>Total St Patrick's Expenditure</b>	<b>1,586</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>(68)</b>	<b>(281)</b>
<b><u>Care Homes Divison Management</u></b>					
Employees	322	107	57	50	141
<b>Care Home Divison Management</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>7,204</b>	<b>2,426</b>	<b>2,756</b>	<b>(330)</b>	<b>(832)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	65	21	21	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	663	211	211	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>7,932</b>	<b>2,658</b>	<b>2,988</b>	<b>(330)</b>	<b>(832)</b>

## Community Care

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Residential & Nursing	21,061	5,280	5,542	(262)	(333)
Domiciliary Care & Supported living	16,093	4,153	4,394	(241)	(1,343)
Direct Payments	15,513	5,668	6,027	(359)	(972)
Day Care	712	164	158	6	13
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>53,379</b>	<b>15,265</b>	<b>16,121</b>	<b>(856)</b>	<b>(2,635)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Residential & Nursing Income	-11,881	-2,782	-2,765	(17)	14
Community Care Income	-3,115	-698	-634	(64)	(210)
Direct Payments Income	-1,034	-199	-260	61	204
Income from other CCGs	-429	-105	-105	0	0
Market sustainability & Improvement Grant	-2,796	-932	-932	0	0
Adult Social Care Support Grant	-6,102	-2,034	-2,034	0	0
War Pension Disregard Grant	-54	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-25,411</b>	<b>-6,750</b>	<b>-6,730</b>	<b>(20)</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>27,968</b>	<b>8,515</b>	<b>9,391</b>	<b>(876)</b>	<b>(2,627)</b>

## Complex Care Pool

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Intermediate Care Services	6,281	1,339	1,345	(6)	(20)
Oakmeadow	2,025	643	625	18	54
Community Home Care First	1,941	169	153	16	48
Joint Equipment Store	880	147	147	0	0
Contracts & SLA's	3,262	-49	-49	0	0
Inglenook	134	37	26	11	32
HICafs	3,720	271	315	(44)	(132)
Carers Breaks	445	76	72	4	11
Carers centre	365	-15	-15	0	0
Residential Care	7,236	2,112	2,112	0	0
Domiciliary Care & Supported Living	4,336	1,445	1,445	0	0
Pathway 3/Discharge Access	426	111	111	0	0
HBC Contracts	72	43	43	0	0
Healthy at Home	28	-28	-28	0	0
Capacity	30	8	4	4	12
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>31,181</b>	<b>6,309</b>	<b>6,306</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Income</b>					
BCF	-15,032	-5,011	-5,011	0	0
CCG Contribution to Pool	-2,959	-986	-986	0	0
Oakmeadow Income	-2	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-17,993</b>	<b>-5,997</b>	<b>-5,997</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>ICB Contribution Share of Surplus</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(3)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>13,188</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>



## Finance Department

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	7,370	2,409	2,301	108	318
Insurances	1,055	620	560	60	180
Supplies & Services	1,118	227	264	(37)	(110)
Rent Allowances	31,500	8,696	8,696	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,902	281	261	20	58
LCR Levy	1,902	0	0	0	0
Bad Debt Provision	223	8	0	8	25
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	27	9	18	55
Discretionary Social Fund	106	33	0	33	98
Discretionary Housing Payments	279	73	73	0	1
Household Support Fund Expenditure	1,051	1,051	1,051	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>46,576</b>	<b>13,425</b>	<b>13,215</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>625</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-342	-176	-202	26	78
Burdens Grant	-58	-53	-58	5	14
Dedicated schools Grant	-150	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Liability Order	-670	-371	-386	15	43
Recovery of Legal Costs	-10	-3	0	(3)	(10)
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	1
Schools SLAs	-319	-4	-2	(2)	(6)
LCR Reimbursement	-1,902	0	0	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-300	-89	-60	(29)	(88)
Rent Allowances	-30,700	-8,512	-8,110	(402)	(1,205)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-24	-23	(1)	(5)
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-279	-94	-93	(1)	(2)
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-453	-151	-151	0	0
Housing Benefits Award Accuracy	0	-15	-22	7	22
Universal Credits	-5	-2	0	(2)	(5)
Household Support Fund Grant	-1,051	326	326	0	0
VEP Grant	0	0	0	0	3
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-89	-23	-22	(1)	0
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-185	-124	-192	68	204
Transfer from Reserves	-34	-13	-13	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-36,774</b>	<b>-9,328</b>	<b>-9,008</b>	<b>(320)</b>	<b>(956)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>9,802</b>	<b>4,097</b>	<b>4,207</b>	<b>(110)</b>	<b>(331)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	493	164	164	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,092	697	697	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-6,814	-2,271	-2,271	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-4,229</b>	<b>-1,410</b>	<b>-1,410</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>5,573</b>	<b>2,687</b>	<b>2,797</b>	<b>(110)</b>	<b>(331)</b>

## Legal Services

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	2,287	697	579	118	354
Agency Related Expenditure	64	64	122	(58)	(175)
Supplies & Services	178	101	92	9	28
Civic Catering & Functions	21	2	1	1	5
Legal Expenses	422	13	63	(50)	(152)
Transport Related Expenditure	8	3	3	0	(1)
Other Expenditure	1	1	1	0	(1)
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>2,981</b>	<b>881</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges Income	-75	-19	-10	(9)	(26)
Reimbursement & Other Grants	0	0	0	0	2
School SLA's	-100	-8	0	(8)	(23)
Licence Income	-371	-78	-69	(9)	(29)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-546</b>	<b>-105</b>	<b>-79</b>	<b>(26)</b>	<b>(76)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>2,435</b>	<b>776</b>	<b>782</b>	<b>(6)</b>	<b>(18)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	62	21	21	0	0
Transport Recharges	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support Recharges	275	92	92	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Support Recharge Income	-2,475	-825	-825	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-2,138</b>	<b>-712</b>	<b>-712</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>(6)</b>	<b>(18)</b>

## ICT &amp; Support Services Department

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	5,827	1,867	1,808	59	177
Supplies & Services	1,169	579	646	(67)	(202)
Capital Finance	100	37	12	25	75
Computer Repairs & Software	2,019	2,058	1,962	96	288
Communication Costs	133	16	45	(29)	(87)
Premises	139	62	64	(2)	(5)
Transport	3	0	0	0	1
Other	4	2	4	(2)	(6)
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>9,394</b>	<b>4,621</b>	<b>4,541</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-849	-250	-240	(10)	(29)
Schools SLA Income	-659	-48	-16	(32)	(98)
Transfer from Reserves	0	-2	-3	1	3
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-1,508</b>	<b>-300</b>	<b>-259</b>	<b>(41)</b>	<b>(124)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>7,886</b>	<b>4,321</b>	<b>4,282</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	373	124	124	0	0
Transport	22	7	7	0	0
Central Support	1,391	464	464	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-10,969	-3,656	-3,656	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-7,689</b>	<b>-3,061</b>	<b>-3,061</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>1,260</b>	<b>1,221</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>117</b>

## Chief Executives Delivery Unit

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend )	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	3,525	1,115	1,085	30	91
Employees Training	99	49	40	9	27
Apprenticeship Levy	330	109	122	(13)	(40)
Supplies & Services	412	210	215	(5)	(14)
Agency	3	3	3	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>4,369</b>	<b>1,486</b>	<b>1,465</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-241	-65	-67	2	6
Schools SLA Income	-580	-32	0	(32)	(96)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-821</b>	<b>-97</b>	<b>-67</b>	<b>(30)</b>	<b>(90)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>3,548</b>	<b>1,389</b>	<b>1,398</b>	<b>(9)</b>	<b>(26)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	157	52	52	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,008	336	336	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	18	18	0	0
Recharge Income	-3,653	-1,218	-1,218	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-2,435</b>	<b>-812</b>	<b>-812</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>1,113</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>(9)</b>	<b>(26)</b>

## Children &amp; Families

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	19,427	5,905	6,307	(402)	(1,204)
Other Premises	392	142	150	(8)	(23)
Supplies & Services	1,592	469	709	(240)	(721)
Transport	367	122	76	46	126
Direct Payments	1,220	477	447	30	86
Commissioned services to Vol Orgs	224	42	42	0	0
Residential Care	27,517	7,077	7,247	(170)	(61)
Out of Borough Adoption	97	24	0	24	92
Out of Borough Fostering	5,469	1,079	1,436	(357)	(1,070)
In House Adoption	557	50	36	14	41
Special Guardianship Order	2,604	725	701	24	73
In House Foster Carer Placements	2,766	791	626	165	493
Lavender House Contract Costs	279	70	69	1	4
Home Support & Respite	494	175	137	38	110
Care Leavers	434	107	106	1	3
Family Support	81	20	11	9	24
Contracted services	3	1	1	0	(1)
Emergency Duty	184	33	33	0	0
Youth Offending Services	461	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>64,168</b>	<b>17,309</b>	<b>18,134</b>	<b>(825)</b>	<b>(2,028)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-33	-12	-7	(5)	(14)
Rents	-82	-31	-31	0	0
Reimbursement & other Grant Income	-493	-217	-166	(51)	(153)
Transfer from reserve	-15	0	-1	1	5
Dedicated Schools Grant	-50	0	0	0	0
Government Grants	-13,477	-4,539	-4,539	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-14,150</b>	<b>-4,799</b>	<b>-4,744</b>	<b>(55)</b>	<b>(162)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>50,018</b>	<b>12,510</b>	<b>13,390</b>	<b>(880)</b>	<b>(2,190)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	736	245	245	0	0
Transport	10	3	3	0	0
Central Support Recharges	3,331	1,110	1,110	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-136	-45	-45	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>3,941</b>	<b>1,313</b>	<b>1,313</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>53,959</b>	<b>13,823</b>	<b>14,703</b>	<b>(880)</b>	<b>(2,190)</b>

## Education, Inclusion &amp; Provision

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	8,788	2,575	2,588	(13)	260
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	73	(73)	(204)
Agency - in addition to establishment	43	45	49	(4)	7
Premises	15	0	1	(1)	2
Supplies & Services	3,010	950	976	(26)	(79)
Independent School Fees	10,155	3,916	3,916	0	0
Schools Contingency	400	117	117	0	0
Transport	43	12	19	(7)	(20)
Schools Transport	2,771	735	914	(179)	(837)
Early Years Payments including Pupil Premium	15,615	3,976	3,976	0	0
Commissioned Services	1,982	578	576	2	9
Inter Authority Special Needs	1,545	503	503	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	115	0	16	(16)	(67)
Capital Finance	4,604	1,423	1,423	0	1
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>49,086</b>	<b>14,830</b>	<b>15,147</b>	<b>(317)</b>	<b>(928)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges Income	-267	-161	-164	3	20
Government Grant Income	-6,541	-1,925	-1,925	0	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-30,267	-10,089	-10,089	0	0
Inter Authority Income	-234	-94	-59	(35)	(211)
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-1,744	-594	-594	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-608	-11	-1	(10)	(59)
Government Grant Income	-500	-142	-142	0	(1)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-40,161</b>	<b>-13,016</b>	<b>-12,974</b>	<b>(42)</b>	<b>(251)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>8,925</b>	<b>1,814</b>	<b>2,173</b>	<b>(359)</b>	<b>(1,179)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	405	135	135	0	0
Transport Support	773	298	298	0	(5)
Central Support	1,947	649	649	0	0
Asset Rental Support	17	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>3,142</b>	<b>1,082</b>	<b>1,082</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(5)</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>12,067</b>	<b>2,896</b>	<b>3,255</b>	<b>(359)</b>	<b>(1,184)</b>

## Community &amp; Greenspaces

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	15,529	5,130	4,921	209	626
Agency - Covering vacancies	12	8	8	0	0
Agency - In addition to establishment	16	42	121	(79)	(237)
Premises	3,304	823	868	(45)	(136)
Supplies & Services	3,589	891	965	(74)	(224)
Transport	117	8	17	(9)	(28)
Extended Producer Responsibility	500	0	0	0	0
Other Agency Costs	454	176	191	(15)	(45)
Other Expenditure	187	12	13	(1)	(5)
Waste Disposal Contracts	7,121	942	955	(13)	(40)
Transfers to Reserves	1,091	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>31,920</b>	<b>8,032</b>	<b>8,059</b>	<b>(27)</b>	<b>(89)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Sales Income	-1,359	-544	-554	10	29
Fees & Charges Income	-6,300	-2,543	-2,530	(13)	(39)
Rental Income	-1,118	-324	-295	(29)	(86)
Government Grant Income	-5,210	-1,319	-1,319	0	0
Reimbursement & Other Grant Income	-871	-171	-171	0	0
SLA Income	-23	0	0	0	0
Internal Fees Income	-216	-37	-84	47	140
Capital Salaries	-236	-12	0	(12)	(35)
Transfers From Reserves	-619	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-15,952</b>	<b>-4,950</b>	<b>-4,953</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>15,968</b>	<b>3,082</b>	<b>3,106</b>	<b>(24)</b>	<b>(80)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	1,657	552	552	0	0
Transport Support	2,433	866	881	(15)	(44)
Central Support	4,297	1,432	1,432	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-843	-281	-281	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>7,743</b>	<b>2,569</b>	<b>2,584</b>	<b>(15)</b>	<b>(44)</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>23,711</b>	<b>5,651</b>	<b>5,690</b>	<b>(39)</b>	<b>(124)</b>

## Economy, Enterprise &amp; Property

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	3,911	1,581	1,490	91	272
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	137	(137)	(270)
Repairs & Maintenance	1,691	486	486	0	0
Premises	174	136	136	(0)	(1)
Energy & Water Costs	1,082	246	218	28	84
NNDR	647	658	655	3	10
Rents	157	40	40	0	0
Economic Regeneration Activities	43	0	0	0	0
Security	508	34	35	(1)	(3)
Supplies & Services	500	201	200	1	3
Supplies & Services - Grant	643	185	185	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	72	11	12	(0)	(1)
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>9,428</b>	<b>3,579</b>	<b>3,594</b>	<b>(16)</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges Income	-482	-166	-195	29	86
Rent - Commercial Properties	-908	-329	-328	(1)	(2)
Rent - Investment Properties	-38	-14	-14	0	0
Government Grant	-668	-215	-215	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-133	-99	-99	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-55	-21	-21	0	0
Recharges to Capital	-412	-39	-39	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-572	-522	-522	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-3,268</b>	<b>-1,405</b>	<b>-1,433</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>6,160</b>	<b>2,174</b>	<b>2,162</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	2,738	912	912	0	0
Transport	26	8	8	0	0
Central Support	2,878	959	959	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-9,342	-3,113	-3,113	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-3,695</b>	<b>-1,234</b>	<b>-1,234</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>2,464</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>928</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>178</b>



## Planning & Transportation Department

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	6,070	1,980	1,901	79	238
Efficiency Savings	-100	-33	0	(33)	(100)
Premises	188	83	68	15	45
Hired & Contracted Services	415	69	60	9	27
Supplies & Services	117	119	196	(77)	(231)
Street Lighting	1,643	189	281	(92)	(275)
Highways Maintenance - Routine & Reactive	1,803	451	591	(140)	(419)
Highways Maintenance - Programmed Works	812	189	0	189	567
Fleet Transport	1,467	451	445	6	19
Bus Support - Halton Hopper Tickets	14	1	0	1	1
Bus Support	506	233	233	0	0
Agency Related Expenditure	8	0	0	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	31	31	31	0	0
NRA Levy	75	0	0	0	0
LCR Levy	1,553	388	388	0	0
Contribution to Reserves	359	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>14,961</b>	<b>4,151</b>	<b>4,194</b>	<b>(43)</b>	<b>(128)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Sales & Rents Income	-97	-32	-20	(12)	(38)
Planning Fees	-798	-266	-248	(18)	(54)
Building Control Fees	-251	-84	-75	(9)	(27)
Other Fees & Charges	-971	-425	-528	103	306
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-174	-24	-55	31	0
Government Grant Income	-32	-50	-50	0	0
Halton Hopper Income	-15	-5	-3	(2)	(7)
Recharge to Capital	-305	0	0	0	0
LCR Levy Reimbursement	-1,553	-388	-388	0	0
Contribution from Reserves	-132	-132	-132	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-4,328</b>	<b>-1,406</b>	<b>-1,499</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>10,633</b>	<b>2,745</b>	<b>2,695</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	739	246	246	0	0
Transport	808	253	249	4	11
Central Support	2,505	837	837	0	0
Asset Rental Support	918	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-6,347	-2,142	-2,210	68	203
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-1,377</b>	<b>-806</b>	<b>-878</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>9,256</b>	<b>1,939</b>	<b>1,817</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>266</b>

## Corporate &amp; Democracy

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend )	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	412	137	161	(24)	(16)
Contracted Services	12	3	0	3	0
Supplies & Services	102	44	22	22	0
Premises Expenditure	24	11	11	0	0
Transport Costs	1	0	40	(40)	0
Members Allowances	994	331	340	(9)	0
Interest Payable - Treasury Management	4,258	1,419	1,281	138	415
Interest Payable - Other	215	72	72	0	0
Contingency	3,638	1,229	0	1,229	3,688
Capital Financing	3,504	3,504	3,366	138	138
Contribution to Reserves	300	300	263	37	0
Debt Management Expenses	20	7	3	4	0
Precepts & Levies	244	244	244	0	0
Pay Award over 2%	0	0	0	0	(1,000)
<b>Efficiency Savings:</b>					
Purchase of Additional Leave	-100	-33	0	(33)	(50)
Voluntary Severance Scheme	-200	-67	0	(67)	(200)
Apprenticeship First Model	-200	-67	0	(67)	(50)
Agency Staff Reduction	-1,700	-567	0	(567)	(1,700)
Accelerate the Lease or Sale of Surplus Land	-100	-33	0	(33)	(100)
Review of Debt Management	-100	-33	0	(33)	(100)
Review Existing Contracts	-200	-67	0	(67)	(100)
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>11,124</b>	<b>6,434</b>	<b>5,803</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>925</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Interest Receivable - Treasury Management	-3,045	-1,015	-1,330	315	944
Interest Receivable - Other	-19	-6	-6	0	0
Other Fees & Charges	-146	-46	-50	4	0
Grants & Reimbursements	-334	-56	-56	0	0
Government Grant Income	-6,272	-2,091	-2,091	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-9,816</b>	<b>-3,214</b>	<b>-3,533</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>944</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>1,308</b>	<b>3,220</b>	<b>2,270</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>1,869</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	22	7	7	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	898	316	316	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-3,304	-839	-839	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-2,384</b>	<b>-516</b>	<b>-516</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>-1,076</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>1,754</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>1,869</b>

## Public Health




	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	5,708	1,656	1,585	71	210
Other Premises	6	2	0	2	6
Supplies & Services	370	80	140	(60)	(181)
Contracts & SLA's	6,875	1,976	1,979	(3)	1
Transport	4	1	0	1	2
Transfer to Reserves	380	0	0	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	20	0	0	0	0
Other Agency	24	24	24	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>13,387</b>	<b>3,739</b>	<b>3,728</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-122	-43	-35	(8)	(23)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-203	-58	-63	5	13
Transfer from Reserves	-120	-36	-36	0	0
Government Grant Income	-12,522	-6,672	-6,672	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-12,967</b>	<b>-6,809</b>	<b>-6,806</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>(10)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>-3,070</b>	<b>-3,078</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	209	70	70	0	0
Transport Support	24	8	9	(1)	(2)
Central Support	1,897	632	632	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-669	-223	-223	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>1,461</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>1,881</b>	<b>-2,583</b>	<b>-2,590</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>26</b>



Progress Against Agreed Savings




APPENDIX 3

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	U	Unlikely to be achieved – currently forecast overspend position
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	U	Currently Under Review
<b>Total ASC Directorate</b>			<b>225</b>	<b>1,655</b>		

## 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 fully 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		Look to increase costs in 2026/27 but this is pending a Government consultation on council tax of which summons charges are being reviewed.
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 part of workstream being undertaken by the Transformation Programme.



<b>Total Finance Department</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>		
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## 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.
<b>Total Legal and Democratic Services</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>		



## 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	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

		placements or find alternatives, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.				registration from OFSTED - this approach is part of the LCR approach working with NFP organisations. In 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
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	Recruitment campaign has been launched to attract in house foster carers so our 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
Legal Costs		Court Costs – implementation of measures in conjunction with Legal Services, to reduce the backlog and ongoing number of Children’s cases going to court,	0	200	U	Progress has been made on reducing the cost of court with success in reducing the number of applications, the reduction in timeliness of proceedings, further work is currently underway to reduce the number of

		thereby reducing the timescales involved and cost of court proceedings, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.				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
<b>Total Children &amp; Families Department</b>			<b>22</b>	<b>1,900</b>		

## 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	U	The consultation with stakeholders and partners has taken place. The results have been analysed and recommendations put to Executive Board for possible policy changes from the beginning of the new academic year.
<b>Total EIP Department</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>300</b>		

## Community and Greenspace 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		
<b>Total Community &amp; Greenspace Dept</b>			<b>12</b>	<b>270</b>		

## 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	U	It is currently too early to establish if this can be achieved. Although all options will be explored.
<b>Total EEP Dept</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>		

## 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.
<b>Total PPT Dept</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>		



## 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
<b>Total Public Health Directorate</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>45</b>		

## 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. Work is being undertaken to identify the value of savings which will be achieved.
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	0	200		Scheme being developed, uncertainty to take up of the scheme.

		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 Transformation Delivery Unit.				
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	U	<p>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.</p> <p>Uncertainty with regard to reductions across Adult Social Care.</p> <p>Highly unlikely the £1.7m saving will be achieved in the current financial year.</p>
Council Wide		Review all existing contracts across the Council to re-consider their requirements and performance on the basis of outputs achieved.	0	200	U	Currently part of workstream being undertaken by the Transformation Programme.
<b>Total Corporate &amp; Democracy</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>2,400</b>		

**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 July 2025

APPENDIX 4

Scheme Detail	205/26 Original Allocation £000	2025/26 Revised Allocation £000	Cumulative Spend to 31 July 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Sept 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Nov 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 Jan 2026 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026 £000	Allocation remaining £000
<b>Childrens Directorate</b>								
Capital Repairs	882.1	882.1	189.0	675.0	688.0	700.0	754.0	128.1
Asbestos Management	10.0	10.0	0.4	3.0	5.0	6.0	10.0	0.0
Schools Access Initiative	37.7	37.7	11.0	15.0	20.0	25.0	30.0	7.7
Basic Need Projects	600.8	600.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	500.8
Small Capital Works	173.0	173.0	22.9	50.0	65.0	80.0	173.0	0.0
SEND capital allocation	1,871.2	1,871.2	142.2	171.0	400.0	575.0	1,022.0	849.2
SEND capital unallocated	1,775.5	1,775.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1,775.5
SCA unallocated	129.3	129.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	129.3
Family Hubs & Start for Life	63.0	63.0	2.3	15.0	35.0	48.0	63.0	0.0
Childcare Expansion	314.8	314.8	18.1	18.1	18.1	18.1	314.8	0.0
AMP Data	25.0	25.0	8.4	23.0	23.0	24.0	25.0	0.0
<b>Childrens Directorate Total</b>	<b>5,882.4</b>	<b>5,882.4</b>	<b>394.3</b>	<b>970.1</b>	<b>1,254.1</b>	<b>1,476.1</b>	<b>2,491.8</b>	<b>3,390.6</b>

## 2025/26 Capital Programme as at 31 July 2025 continued

Scheme Detail	205/26 Original Allocation £000	2025/26 Revised Allocation £000	Cumulative Spend to 31 July 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Sept 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Nov 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 Jan 2026 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026 £000	Allocation remaining £000
<b>Adults Directorate</b>								
Grants - Disabled Facilities	2,200.0	2,000.0	248.7	1,100.0	1,450.0	1,800.0	2,000.0	0.0
Stair Lifts	400.0	650.0	191.9	325.0	430.0	550.0	650.0	0.0
Joint Funding RSL Adaptations	300.0	250.0	72.8	125.0	170.0	210.0	250.0	0.0
Madeline McKenna Residential Home	300.0	250.0	24.5	125.0	170.0	210.0	250.0	0.0
Millbrow Care Home	200.0	200.0	21.1	100.0	130.0	170.0	200.0	0.0
St Lukes	50.0	150.0	39.7	75.0	100.0	125.0	150.0	0.0
St Patricks	200.0	200.0	13.0	100.0	130.0	170.0	200.0	0.0
Care Home Refurbishment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Telehealthcare Digital Switchover	135.0	135.0	0.0	70.0	90.0	110.0	135.0	0.0
Oakmeadow and Peelhouse Network Improvements	40.0	40.0	0.0	20.0	30.0	30.0	40.0	0.0
Crow Wood Lane Specialist Housing	250.0	250.0	0.0	126.0	170.0	210.0	250.0	0.0
<b>Adults Directorate Total</b>	<b>4,075.0</b>	<b>4,125.0</b>	<b>611.7</b>	<b>2,166.0</b>	<b>2,870.0</b>	<b>3,585.0</b>	<b>4,125.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**2025/26 Capital Programme as at 31 July 2025 continued**

Scheme Detail	205/26 Original Allocation	2025/26 Revised Allocation	Cumulative Spend to 31 July 2025	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Sept 2025	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Nov 2025	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 Jan 2026	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026	Allocation remaining
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Environment &amp; Regeneration Directorate</b>								
Stadium Minor Works	22.1	22.1	24.6	24.6	24.6	24.6	24.6	-2.5
Halton Leisure Centre	99.7	99.7	71.8	76.8	86.8	88.8	90.8	8.9
Children's Playground Equipment	67.8	67.8	50.5	55.5	60.5	60.5	65.0	2.8
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Upton Improvements	13.0	13.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.0	0.0
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12.0	12.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.0	0.0
Open Spaces Schemes	600.0	600.0	384.0	434.0	484.0	534.0	600.0	0.0
Runcorn Town Park	450.6	450.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	60.0	125.0	325.6
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,841.6	1,841.6	125.3	153.4	170.0	180.0	250.0	1,591.6
Pickerings Pasture Cafe	469.2	469.2	6.0	80.0	175.0	300.0	450.0	19.2
Cemetery Infrastructure work	469.1	469.1	0.0	0.0	89.0	207.0	410.0	59.1
Stadium Public Address System	810.0	346.0	26.0	76.0	176.0	286.0	346.0	0.0
Litter Bins	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0
*Replacement Cremator*	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Equality Act Improvement Works	303.5	303.5	0.0	20.0	150.0	236.0	303.5	0.0
Foundary Lane Residential Area	3,520.9	3,520.9	647.7	707.5	800.0	1,020.9	3,520.9	0.0
Property Improvements	231.1	231.1	89.4	95.5	133.2	153.6	231.1	0.0
Town Deal	21,823.1	18,949.5	3,010.7	5,631.6	8,663.1	11,300.7	13,210.2	5,739.3
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	101.2	101.2	0.0	0.0	20.0	55.0	102.2	-1.0
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	82.0	82.0	4.2	4.2	33.3	56.4	82.0	0.0
Changing Places	17.0	17.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.0	0.0
Kingsway Centre Demolition	708.0	708.0	293.0	345.2	535.0	602.2	708.0	0.0
Port of Weston	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sci-tech Daresbury Project Violet	2,200.0	2,200.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2,200.0	0.0
Astmoor Masterplan	81.6	81.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	30.0	81.6	0.0
Sci-tech Daresbury - CPO	3,000.0	3,000.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3,000.0	0.0

**2025/26 Capital Programme as at 31 July 2025 continued**



Scheme Detail	205/26 Original Allocation £000	2025/26 Revised Allocation £000	Cumulative Spend to 31 July 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Sept 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Nov 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 Jan 2026 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026 £000	Allocation remaining £000
Bridge and Highway Maintenance	839.2	839.2	0.0	209.8	419.6	629.4	839.2	0.0
Runcorn Busway	90.0	90.0	76.0	90.0	90.0	90.0	90.0	0.0
ATF3 Murdishaw to Whitehouse	757.0	757.0	370.0	757.0	757.0	757.0	757.0	0.0
ATF4 - Widnes Town Centre Accessibility	114.5	114.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	114.5
A56 Reconstruction	943.7	943.7	0.0	0.0	314.5	629.0	943.7	0.0
LCWIP phase 2 Daresbury	3,862	3,862	19.0	34.5	84.5	84.5	84.5	3,777.3
Pot Hole Funding	968	968	36.0	269.0	502.0	735.0	968.0	0.4
CRSTS	4,405	4,405	351.0	1,364.5	2,378.0	3,391.5	4,405.0	0.0
Street Lighting - Structural Maintenance	1,025.1	1,025.1	0.0	50.0	100.0	150.0	200.0	825.1
Street Lighting - Upgrades	728.4	728.4	0.0	25.0	50.0	75.0	100.0	628.4
East Runcorn Connectivity	5,851.7	5,851.7	3,141.0	4,496.4	5,851.8	5,851.8	5,851.8	-0.1
Risk Management	712.9	120.0	23.0	43.0	53.0	83.0	103.0	17.0
Widnes Loops	0.0	0.0	65.0	65.0	65.0	65.0	65.0	-65.0
Fleet Replacements	4,482.0	2,500.0	214.0	785.5	1,357.0	1,928.5	2,500.0	0.0
Early Land Acquisition Mersey Gateway	210.0	80.0	45.0	62.3	68.0	73.0	80.0	0.0
Mersey Gateway Crossings Board	60.0	0.0	-249.6	-247.0	-244.4	-241.8	-241.8	241.8
<b>Environment &amp; Regeneration Directorate Total</b>	<b>62,333.3</b>	<b>55,890.7</b>	<b>8,823.6</b>	<b>15,709.3</b>	<b>23,446.5</b>	<b>29,496.6</b>	<b>42,608.3</b>	<b>13,282.4</b>
<b>Chief Executives Directorate</b>								
IT Rolling Programme	805.6	1,305.6	677.1	767.1	937.5	1,100.5	1,305.6	0.0
Halton Smart Microgrid	10,870.0	1,000.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1,000.0	0.0
Transformation Programme	1,538.0	2,465.7	832.7	1,293.9	1,729.3	2,107.0	2,465.7	0.0
<b>Chief Executives Directorate Total</b>	<b>13,213.6</b>	<b>4,771.3</b>	<b>1,509.8</b>	<b>2,061.0</b>	<b>2,666.8</b>	<b>3,207.5</b>	<b>4,771.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>85,504.4</b>	<b>70,669.4</b>	<b>11,339.4</b>	<b>20,906.4</b>	<b>30,237.4</b>	<b>37,765.2</b>	<b>53,996.4</b>	<b>16,673.0</b>

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	<b>Pay costs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay award</li> <li>• Staff Turnover Saving Target</li> <li>• Agency, casuals and overtime</li> <li>• National Living Wage</li> <li>• Pension Costs</li> </ul>	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget based upon individual staff members/vacancies</li> <li>• Budget monitoring</li> <li>• Contingency</li> <li>• Balances</li> <li>• Medium Term Forecast</li> <li>• Engage with Cheshire Pension Scheme and pension actuary</li> <li>• Market supplement paid in multiple service areas</li> <li>• Employer of Choice Initiative</li> <li>• Connect to Halton – Review of Scheme</li> </ul>	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%, this will cost approximately a further £1m to the budget. Backdated pay to be paid in August 2025</p> <p>Agency costs and usage remain high although some evidence of reduction in numbers within Children Social Care.</p> <p>Market Supplements being paid to increasing number of service users.</p>	31/7/25

											Connect to Halton scheme went live September 2024, agency and casual appointments to be covered by the scheme.	
2	<b>Redundancy and Early Retirements</b>	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits Tracking Process</li> <li>• Future savings to take into account cost of redundancy and early retirements.</li> <li>• Seek Government approval to use capital receipts to fund transformation costs.</li> <li>• Develop policy for voluntary severance scheme</li> </ul>	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.</p>	31/07/25

3	<b>Savings not achieved</b>	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget monitoring</li> <li>• Contingency</li> <li>• Rigorous process in approving savings.</li> <li>• Review of savings at departmental and directorate level</li> <li>• Monthly budget monitoring</li> <li>• Medium Term Financial Forecast</li> <li>• RAG monitoring of savings included in bi-monthly monitoring reports.</li> <li>• Transformation saving targets reported monthly through Transformation Programme Board.</li> </ul>	4	2	8	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 meeting on monthly basis to discuss progress against programme.</p>	31/07/25
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4	<b>Price inflation</b>	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prudent budget provision</li> <li>• Latest forecast information used eg. utilities</li> <li>• Budget monitoring</li> <li>• Contingency</li> <li>• Balances</li> <li>• CPI/RPI monitoring</li> <li>• MTFS</li> </ul>	3	3	9	ED/SB	Monthly	<p>CPI for June 2025 is 3.6% and RPI is 4.4%. Both running higher than inflation included in 2025.26 budget.</p> <p>Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecast inflation to be 3.2% in 2025 and 2.1% through to 2027. Rates are higher than forecast that at 2025/26 budget setting and remain above Governments 2% target.</p>	31/07/25
5	<b>Review of LG Finance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business rates retention – 100% Pilot and Review</li> <li>• Fair Funding Review</li> <li>• National Public Spending Plans</li> <li>• Social Care Green Paper</li> </ul>	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MPs</li> <li>• SIGOMA / LG Futures</li> <li>• Liverpool City Region &amp; Merseyside Treasurers Group</li> <li>• Medium Term Financial Strategy</li> </ul>	3	3	9	ED/SB/NS/M W/MG	Weekly/ Monthly	<p>Business rate retention pilot continues through to March 2026.</p> <p>Government are committed to providing more certainty on LG Finances through multi year settlements.</p>	31/07/25

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member of business rate retention pilot region</li> <li>• Dialogue with DCLG</li> <li>• Responding to reviews and consultations</li> </ul>						<p>Government issued the Fair Funding consultation on 20 June 2025. Closing date of 15 August. Halton response together with that of LCR and Sigma.</p> <p>Resetting the Business Rates Retention consultation was issued by Government in April 2025 with Halton submitting a response prior to the 02 June deadline.</p>	
6	<b>Treasury Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borrowing</li> <li>• Investment</li> </ul>	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treasury Management Strategy</li> <li>• Link Asset Services advice</li> <li>• Treasury Management planning and monitoring</li> </ul>	1	3	3	ED/SB/MG	Daily / Quarterly	<p>BoE base rate reduced to 4.0%.</p> <p>Impact of Exceptional Financial Support request to be assessed with regards to timing of future borrowing.</p>	31/07/25

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance at Networking and Benchmarking Groups</li> <li>Officer and Member Training</li> </ul>							
7	<b>Demand led budgets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children in Care</li> <li>Out of borough fostering</li> <li>Community Care</li> <li>High Needs</li> </ul>	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget monitoring</li> <li>Contingency</li> <li>Balances</li> <li>Review service demand</li> <li>Directorate recovery groups</li> <li>Monthly budget monitoring</li> <li>Children Improvement Plan Investment Funding</li> </ul>	4	4	16	ED/SB/NS/MW	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>	31/07/25
8	<b>Mersey Gateway Costs</b>	4	2	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular monitoring with Crossing Board</li> </ul>	2	1	2	ED/SB/MG	Quarterly	<p>Arrangements in place to monitor spend and</p>	31/07/25

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs</li> <li>• Toll Income</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Accounting treatment</li> </ul>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital reserve</li> <li>• Government Grant</li> <li>• Liquidity Fund</li> </ul>						availability of liquidity fund.	
9	<b>Council Tax Collection</b>	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council tax monitoring on monthly basis</li> <li>• Review of Collection Rate</li> <li>• Collection Fund Balance</li> <li>• Provision for bad debts</li> <li>• Review recovery procedures</li> <li>• Benchmarking</li> </ul>	3	2	6	ED/PG/SB/P D/BH/MG	Monthly	<p>Collection rate to 31 July 2025 was 36.16% which is marginally lower than the rate of 36.09% at the same point last year.</p> <p>To 31 July 2025 £1.268m was collected in relation to old year debt.</p>	31/07/25
10	<b>Business Rates Retention Scheme</b>	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and monitoring of latest business rates income to baseline and estimate for year.</li> <li>• Prudent allowance for losses in collection</li> </ul>	3	1	3	ED/SB/LB/M G	Monthly	<p>Collection rate to 31 July 2025 was 40.69% which is 0.9% lower than the rate at the same point last year.</p> <p>To 31 May 2025 £0.345m was</p>	31/07/25



					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prudent provision set aside for losses from valuation appeals</li> <li>• Regular monitoring of annual yield and baseline / budget position</li> <li>• Benchmarking Groups</li> <li>• Review recovery procedures</li> </ul>						collected in relation to old year debt.	
11	<b>Income recovery</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncertainty to economy following cost of living and high inflation</li> </ul>	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate charging policy</li> <li>• Budget monitoring</li> <li>• Contingency</li> <li>• Balances</li> <li>• Income benchmarking</li> </ul>	3	2	6	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>	31/07/25
13	<b>Capital Programme</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs</li> </ul>	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Management</li> <li>• Regular monitoring</li> </ul>	3	2	6	Project Managers/ED /SB/LH	Quarterly	Capital receipts have been fully committed therefore new	31/07/25

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Key Major Projects</li> <li>• Clawback of Grant</li> <li>• Availability and timing of capital receipts</li> <li>• Cashflow</li> <li>• Contractors</li> </ul>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed financial analysis of new schemes to ensure they are affordable</li> <li>• Targets monitored to minimise clawback of grant.</li> <li>• Contractor due diligence</li> <li>• Dialogue with Government departments.</li> </ul>						capital schemes need to bring own funding.	
14	<b>Academy Schools</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of transfer upon Council budget</li> <li>• Loss of income to Council Services</li> </ul>	2	4	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early identification of school decisions</li> <li>• DfE Regulations</li> <li>• Prudent consideration of financial transactions to facilitate transfer</li> <li>• Services continue to be offered to academies</li> <li>• Transfer Protocol</li> </ul>	1	3	3	ED/SB/NS	Monthly	Consideration given in MTFS for loss of funding.	31/07/25
15	<b>Reserves</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diminishing reserves, used to balance budget,</li> </ul>	3	4	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitored on a bi-monthly basis, reported to Management Team and Exec Board</li> </ul>	3	3	9	ED/SB	Quarterly	Monitored and reported on a regular basis.	31/07/25

	fund overspend positions.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benchmarking</li> <li>• Financial Forecast</li> <li>• Programme to replenish reserves.</li> </ul>						<p>Council reserves at historic low levels.</p> <p>Reserves will need to be replenished within future budgets</p>	
16	<p><b>Budget Balancing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council has struggled to achieve a balanced budget position for a number of years.</li> <li>• Forecast for current year is an overspend position of £19m.</li> <li>• Reserves insufficient to balance current year budget.</li> <li>• Council has been given approval in-principle for Exceptional Financial Support (day to day costs funded through capital borrowings) for 2024/25 and 2025/26.</li> </ul>	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current year budgets monitored on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Forward forecasting through to March 2029 reported on a prudent basis.</li> <li>• Regular conversations with DHLUC re Council's financial position.</li> <li>• LGA to undertake a financial assurance review.</li> <li>• Transformation programme in place.</li> <li>• Financial Recovery Plan required to better inform how the Council</li> </ul>	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> <p>Financial recovery plan to be put in place to limit Council exposure to EFS</p>	31/07/25

					will achieve future sustainable budgets.						and repayment of borrowings to date.	
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**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 11 September 2025

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director Environment and Regeneration

**PORTFOLIO:** Employment Learning, Skills and Community

**SUBJECT:** DCBL Stadium - New PAVA system and Structural Steel Maintenance Works and Pitch Replacement

**WARD(S)** Central & West Bank

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Member approval to proceed with necessary works to the Public Address Voice Alarm (PAVA) System, the Structural Steelwork Repairs and replacement Pitch at the DBCL Stadium as identified in the report.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1) The capital works identified in the report in sections 3.3 to 3.6 be approved;**
- 2) Consideration be given to the options outlined in paragraph 5.4 below regarding how the annual capital financing costs might be funded;**
- 3) Council be asked to add these works to the capital programme based upon the totals outlined in paragraph 5.1 below, subject to further work to establish detailed costs and whether to proceed with option A or option B;**
- 4) Approval of the detailed costs and the option to be undertaken, be delegated to the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Employment Learning, Skills and Community.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Public Address Voice Alarm (PAVA) system at the stadium is in poor condition, it does not now meet current regulations and is not functioning correctly, thus is not fit for purpose. We have investigated the possibility of repairing the existing system, but it is evident that this is not feasible as such replacement is the only viable option.

- 3.2 The introduction of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, also known as the 'Protect Duty' aims to improve public safety by ensuring certain public venues and events implement measures to protect against terrorism. The replacement of the PAVA system at the stadium will help ensure that we meet the requirement of the act.
- 3.3 We have recently been through a procurement process in respect of the PAVA system to obtain competitive prices for the necessary work. The lowest tender return amounted to circa £850k inclusive of a contingency and fees.
- 3.4 The above figure accounts for works to all four stands, we could proceed on a phased basis however initially undertaking work to the South, West and North stands, with a view to completing the East Stand at a later date. The reduced cost for this amounts to circa £725k inclusive of a contingency and fees.
- 3.5 Problems with corrosion to the exposed structural steelwork at the Stadium was first identified in the Stadium's general safety certificate report dated October 2017. Since then, works to the worst areas of corrosion, the barriers, has been completed, but the latest safety report is now recommending that we progress with the dealing with the corrosion elsewhere to the steelwork.
- 3.6 We have not gone through a procurement process as yet in respect of the structural steelwork repairs/redecoration works, we have however obtained estimated costs for the work. The estimated cost for the repair/redecoration works amounts to circa £725k inclusive of fees to all four stands. We could proceed on a phased basis however commencing with works to the South, West and North stands only, the budget estimate for this amounts to circa £600k inclusive of fees. We will clearly need to go through a procurement process in respect of the above to obtain competitive quotes prior to proceeding.
- 3.7 A recent assessment conducted by specialist consultants, SportsLab, has confirmed that the stadium's artificial playing surface is exhibiting measurable signs of performance decline. These findings are consistent with the pitch's age and intensity of use. While current test results remain within the minimum acceptable thresholds, they are trending toward sub-optimal levels.
- 3.8 The report recommends that planning for full resurfacing should now commence. Prior to any capital investment, a more detailed investigation is advised to assess the integrity of the base layer and the effectiveness of the drainage system. This will be critical to ensuring long-term compliance with performance standards and to inform the scope of any future works.

- 3.9 In the short term, remedial works are being scheduled to address immediate concerns. These include an infill top-up and potential surface reconditioning, with an estimated cost of £10,000. Without this intervention, further deterioration could result in the pitch falling below compliance standards.
- 3.10 To support long-term planning, quotations will be obtained for a full pitch replacement. The estimated cost for a new artificial surface, including the installation of a new shock pad, is approximately £600,000.
- 3.11 Additionally, the stadium will seek quotations for alternative surface options, including hybrid and natural grass systems. Depending on the specification, these options could cost up to £1.2 million.
- 3.12 An artificial pitch would enable continued community access, supporting grassroots sports, school programmes, and local club activities. It would also provide consistent and reliable training facilities for stadium tenants, regardless of weather conditions or surface wear. The artificial surface is durable and generally more cost-effective to maintain over time. However, it would significantly limit the stadium's ability to host showcase events sanctioned by the RFL, RFU, and FA, as these governing bodies typically require natural or hybrid surfaces for elite-level fixtures. This limitation could impact the stadium's profile and revenue potential from high-profile matches.
- 3.13 In contrast, a grass or hybrid pitch would meet the standards required to bid for and host premier showcase events from the RFL, RFU, and FA. This would elevate the stadium's reputation and open up opportunities for show case events. The natural playing surface aligns with professional sport expectations and enhances the venue's appeal for top-tier competitions. However, the installation and ongoing maintenance of a grass or hybrid pitch would be significantly more expensive. It would also prevent community usage and restrict tenant access, particularly for training, in order to preserve pitch quality and avoid overuse.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no policy implications for the above work. The procurement process will comply fully with the Council's procurement policy and standing orders.

## 5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The estimated capital costs to carry out the works are as indicated below. This would require Council to approve an amendment to the capital programme to include these cost estimates.

Works	All stands and Grass / Hybrid	South, West and North Stands only and Artificial
	<i>Option A</i>	<i>Option B</i>
PAVA system	£850,000	£725,000
Steelwork Repairs	£725,000	£600,000
Pitch Replacement	£1,200,000	£600,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,775,000</b>	<b>£1,925,000</b>

5.2 Based upon the capital expenditure estimates above, the annual cost of financing this expenditure would be approximately £0.235m for Option B and £0.373 for Option A.

5.3 There is no budget provision currently available to meet this annual revenue cost, therefore, it would need to be included as growth within the 2026/27 revenue budget. Given that the Council's revenue budget gap is currently being funded by borrowing under the Exceptional Financial Support arrangement, the above growth would increase the budget gap and therefore the amount of EFS borrowing required and associated cost.

5.4 Alternative options for funding/reducing the annual capital financing costs would include;

- obtaining a capital contribution from the stadium's tenants
- significantly increasing the stadium tenant's annual rent
- seeking external grant funding towards elements of the works
- utilising the Council's building maintenance budget to fund the capital financing costs, thereby reducing the budget available in future years for maintenance of the remainder of the Council's property portfolio
- deleting/reducing other schemes currently included within the Council's capital programme

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

### 6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

**Pitch Replacement:** Supports physical activity and community sports, promoting health and independence.

### 6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

**Investment in Infrastructure:** Capital improvements stimulate local economic activity through procurement and employment.

**Pitch Options:** A hybrid or natural pitch could attract elite events,



boosting tourism and local business.

**Artificial Pitch:** Enables consistent community use, supporting grassroots sports and local clubs.

### 6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

**Artificial Pitch Benefits:** Facilitates school programmes, youth clubs, and family-friendly activities.

**Safe Stadium Environment:** Encourages family attendance and participation in events.

### 6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

**Community Access to Facilities:** Artificial pitch supports inclusive access for all groups, including those with fewer resources.

**Safety Improvements:** Ensures equitable protection for all visitors, regardless of background.

### 6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

None identified.

### 6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

**Investment in a Key Community Asset:** Demonstrates commitment to maintaining and enhancing a valued public venue.

**Support for Local Events and Identity:** Improvements position the stadium as a hub for community pride and engagement.

## 7.0 **Risk Analysis**

7.1 Failure to upgrade the PAVA system will leave the Stadium in a vulnerable position as currently the system does not meet current regulations so this may impact on our ability to hold events at the Stadium in the future. It will also impact on ensuring that the building meets the requirements of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025.

7.2 Failure to undertake the remedial/redecoration works to the exposed structural steelwork will result in the further deterioration of the protective coating to the steelwork, which will ultimately lead to there being a health & safety risk which will negatively impact on the stadium.

## 8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None to report

## 9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None to report.

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

**10.1** None under the meaning of the Act.

<b>REPORT:</b>	Council
<b>DATE:</b>	22 October 2025
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Director – Legal and Democratic Services
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Resources
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Licensing Act 2003 – Statement of Licensing Policy
<b>WARDS:</b>	Boroughwide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To adopt the Statement of Licensing Policy.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Council**

- 1. Adopt the Statement of Licensing Policy attached to this report to come into effect immediately following the expiry of the current policy on 6 January 2026; and**
- 2. Directs that the Director – Legal and Democratic Services publishes the Statement of Licensing Policy in accordance with section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003**

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1** The Council's current Statement of Licensing Policy is due to expire on 6 January 2026. A new policy must therefore be in place on 7 January 2026.
- 3.2** A review of the current Statement of Licensing Policy has been undertaken by Officers and amendments have been made to reflect the Council's updated Corporate Policies and to reference the Counter Terrorism and The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, also known as Martyn's Law, which received Royal Assent in April 2025. As this law is not yet in force, no substantive changes have been made, with Officers advising that further amendments would be made on the next review of the Policy once government guidance on the Act has been published and the full impact on the licensing regime is understood. This review would take place sooner than the usual maximum 5 year review period. A copy of the

updated Policy can be found at Appendix A and a schedule of amendments can be found at Appendix B.

- 3.3 At a meeting of the Regulatory Committee on 2 July 2025, the updated Statement of Licensing Policy was considered and the Regulatory Committee authorised the Director – Legal and Democratic Services to undertake a consultation exercise in respect of its contents as required by section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003.
  
- 3.4 The consultation exercise was completed on 15 August 2025 and only one response was received which was from the Police, as one of the responsible authorities. Their proposed amendment, which is detailed further in the Schedule of Amendments, simply sought to update the reference to a scheme that no longer existed. As this was not a substantive change, a further consultation exercise on the proposed amendment was not required.
  
- 3.5 At its meeting on 17 September 2025, the Regulatory Committee received a report on the consultation exercise and resolved to recommend the new Statement of Licensing Policy for adoption by the Council.
  
- 3.5 The Regulatory Committee also acknowledged that the Council had a duty to keep the Policy under review and to make such revisions to it, at such times, as it considers appropriate. It therefore welcomed a further review once the full implications of Martyn’s Law was understood.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Once it comes into effect, the Statement of Licensing Policy will be used in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003.

#### **5.0 FINANICAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 NONE

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

- 6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

None

**6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

The Policy supports the building of a strong, sustainable local economy whilst also ensuring adherence to the legal requirements of the Licensing regime.

**6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

The Council's Statement of Licensing Policy operates under a separate statutory code but since it involves licensable activities it is designed to contribute to the licensing objective of the protection of children from harm.

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

None

**6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future**

None

**6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

None

**7.0. RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1. Under section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003 requires the Council, as licensing authority, to determine and publish a statement of its licensing policy at least once every five years. The policy must be published before its carries out any licensing functions under the Act.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no equality and diversity issues to highlight.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no climate change implications since the decision will have no direct effect on the environment.

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

The report is based on the Licensing Policy 2003. See also the Councils existing Statement of Licensing Policy.



Halton Borough Council

STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

LICENSING ACT 2003

7<sup>th</sup> January 2026 – 6<sup>th</sup> January 2031

DRAFT

**LICENSING ACT 2003**

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY**

**1. Introduction**

2. The Licensing Act 2003 (“the Act”) requires Licensing Authorities, in our case Halton Borough Council (“the Council”), to provide a Statement of Licensing Policy (“the Policy”) before it can make any decisions on licence applications.

3. The Policy is set out in this document. It details the general principles that the Council will take into account when making its licensing decisions. In drawing up the Policy the Council is required to have regard to Government Guidance (“the Guidance”) produced under Section 182 of the Act. If the Policy departs from the Guidance the Council must be able to justify its decision should there be a legal challenge. This Council believes that the Policy is consistent with the Guidance as well as with the provisions of the Act.

4. The aim of the Policy is to promote the four licensing objectives set out in the Act, namely:-

- The prevention of crime and disorder;
- Public safety;
- The prevention of public nuisance; and
- The protection of children from harm.

5. The Council wish to promote these objectives whilst still encouraging a vibrant and sustainable entertainment and leisure industry. The Council recognises both the needs of local residents for a safe and healthy environment in which to work and live and the importance of safe and well-run entertainment and leisure facilities to the area.

6. The Policy aims to provide guidance to applicants, responsible authorities and interested parties on the general approach to licensing in the area. Although each and every application will be dealt with separately and on its own individual merits, the Council in writing this Policy is offering guidance on the wider considerations that will be taken into account.



7. The Policy comes into force on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and will apply for the five year period commencing on that date subject to any amendments or reviews which may be undertaken during that period. The Policy is intended for the guidance of the Council's Regulatory Committee (which has responsibility for the Council's licensing functions) as well as to assist applicants in presenting their application. It is not intended to limit the power or fetter the discretion of the Regulatory Committee who will listen to, and determine on its own individual merits, any application placed before it.

#### **8. Scope of the Policy**

9. The Policy covers applications, reviews, transfers and variations of licences for the following licensable activities:

- The sale by retail of alcohol
- The supply of alcohol by or on behalf of a club to, or to the order of a member of that club
- The provision of regulated entertainment, and
- The provision of late night refreshment

#### **10. Licensing Objectives**

11. The Council will carry out its functions under the Act with a view to promoting the licensing objectives, namely;

- The prevention of crime and disorder
- Public safety
- The prevention of public nuisance, and
- The protection of children from harm

12. No one objective is considered to be of any more importance than any other.

13. In carrying out its functions the Council will also have regard to this Policy and to the Guidance as issued by the Secretary of State under section 182 of the Act from time to time.

14. Individual applicants will be required to address the licensing objectives and address the issues of the needs of the local community, the way in which the premises is to operate, the size, location and type of premises, and any entertainment which is to be provided.

15. The Council's vision as set out in the Council's Framework is that

*Halton aim to deliver the highest possible standards of work, and look for opportunities to improve where we can, we take steps to understand the needs of our customers, colleagues and stakeholders, ensuring those needs are reflected in how we deliver our services. We encourage and support innovation and creativity to improve service delivery and outcomes.*

16. The Council's vision as set out within the Corporate Strategy 2024 – 2029;

*“Halton will support residents to live in a decent and affordable homes, surrounded by safe and thriving communities, working with everybody to keep our neighbourhoods clean and tidy. Encouraging good quality health and wellbeing. Fostering a strong, diverse local economy where there is access to good jobs and successful businesses in our community, providing opportunities for all”*

17. The Council has identified strategic priorities and key themes that are set out in its Corporate Plan 2024-2029 . These are:

- Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence,
- Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy,
- Supporting Children, Young People and Families,
- Tackling Inequality, Helping those who are most in need,
- Working towards a greener future,
- Valuing and appreciating Halton and our community.

18. So far as is consistent with the licensing objectives, the Council will carry out its licensing functions with a view to promoting these priorities and themes (including priorities and themes which may be adopted from time to time).

19. The Council will encourage the provision of a wide range of entertainment activities within the Halton area including promotion of live music, dance and so on, in the interests of broadening cultural opportunities within the local community.

## **20. General principles**

21. If an application for a premises licence or club premises certificate has been made lawfully and there have been no representations from responsible authorities or other persons, the licensing authority must grant the application, subject only to conditions that are consistent with the operating schedule and relevant mandatory conditions. It is

recommended that licence applicants contact responsible authorities when preparing their operating schedules.

## **22. Integrating Strategies**

23. The Council's core plans and strategies are set out in the Corporate Plan.

24. The Council will secure the proper integration of its licensing Policy with its core plans and strategies as well as its local crime prevention, planning, transport, tourism, equal opportunities, race equality schemes, and cultural strategies and any other plans introduced for the management of town centres and the night-time economy (as to which, see below).

25. This will be achieved by ensuring that the Council's Regulatory Committee receive appropriate reports on all relevant strategies, plans and policies. Many of these strategies are not directly related to the promotion of the four licensing objectives, but, indirectly, impact upon them. Co-ordination and integration of such policies, strategies and initiatives are therefore important.

26. Many licensable activities take place at night-time: when much of the rest of the economy has closed down. It follows that licensable activities can contribute a very significant element of the night-time economy, particularly within town centres. Emerging Town Centre Strategies for Widnes and Runcorn will contribute to the development of the night-time economy and assist the Council in exercising its licensing functions.

27. This statement sets out the Council's general approach to the making of licensing decisions. It does not override the right of any person to make representations on an application or to seek a review of a licence or certificate where provision has been made for them to do so in the Act.

28. Licensing is about regulating the carrying on of licensable activities on licensed premises, by qualifying clubs and at temporary events within the terms of the Act. Conditions attached to various authorisations will be focused on matters which are within the control of individual licensees and others in possession of relevant authorisations. Accordingly, the Council will focus its attention on the premises being used for licensable activities and the vicinity of those premises.

29. In addressing this matter, the Council will primarily focus on the direct impact of the activities taking place at the licensed premises on members of public living, working or engaged in normal activity in the area concerned. Licensing law is not the primary mechanism for the general control of nuisance and anti-social behaviour by individuals once they are away from the licensed premises and, therefore, beyond the direct control of the individual, club or business holding the licence, certificate or authorisation concerned. Nonetheless, it is a key aspect of such control and licensing law will always be part of a holistic approach to the management of the evening and night-time economy in town and city centres.

### **30 The need for licensed premises**

31. There can be confusion about the difference between “need” and the “cumulative impact” of premises on the licensing objectives, for example, on crime and disorder. “Need” concerns the commercial demand for another pub or restaurant or hotel. This is not a matter for the Council in discharging its licensing functions. “Need” is a matter for planning committees and for the market.

### **32. The cumulative impact of a concentration of licensed premises**

33. “Cumulative impact” is not mentioned specifically in the Act but means in the Guidance the potential impact on the promotion of the licensing objectives of a significant number of licensed premises concentrated in one area. For example, the potential impact on crime and disorder or public nuisance on a town or city centre of a large concentration of licensed premises in that part of the Council’s area. The cumulative impact of licensed premises on the promotion of the licensing objectives is a proper matter for the Council to consider in developing its licensing Policy statement.

34. The Council will not impose any arbitrary quotas on numbers of licensed premises, nor will it impose any restriction or limitation on trading hours in a particular area.

35. The Council considers that there are presently no areas within the Borough of Halton which can be considered to be causing cumulative impact on one or more of the licensing objectives. However, the position will be reviewed should evidence be produced to justify a change in policy.

36. It should be noted that the absence of a special Policy does not prevent the Council or any responsible authority or interested party making representations on a new application for the grant of a licence on the grounds that the premises will give rise to a negative cumulative impact on one or more of the licensing objectives.

37. Notwithstanding what is set out in this statement about other mechanisms for controlling cumulative impact, applicants will be expected to demonstrate (where appropriate) how their proposals are consistent with dealing with crime and disorder and nuisance in the vicinity of their premises. Attention should be paid to their proposals in respect of hours of operation and the management of their premises generally. Regard should be had to issues such as taxis and transportation and the pattern of licensed premises and food premises in the vicinity, and, not least, the distribution of residential premises in the vicinity.

**38. Other mechanisms for controlling cumulative effect**

**39. Early Morning Restriction Order (EMRO) - Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011.** An early morning restriction order (EMRO) is a power in the Licensing Act 2003 that will enable licensing authorities to restrict the sale of alcohol in the whole or a part of their areas for any specified period between 12 midnight and 6 a.m. if they consider this appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives. The Council is not currently considering introducing an EMRO.

**40 Late Night Levy.- Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011.** The late night levy (“the levy”) will enable licensing authorities to raise a contribution from late-opening alcohol suppliers towards policing the night-time economy. It will be a local power that licensing authorities can choose whether or not to exercise. It must cover the whole of the licensing authority’s area. However, the licensing authority will also choose the period during which the levy applies every night between midnight and 6am and decide what exemptions and reductions should apply from a list set out in regulation. The Council is not currently considering introducing a Late Night Levy but the position will be reviewed should evidence be produced to justify a change in policy.

41. Licensing law is not the primary mechanism for the general control of nuisance and anti-social behaviour by individuals once they are away from the licensed premises and, therefore, beyond the direct control of the individual, club or business holding the licence, certificate or authorisation concerned. Nonetheless, it is a key aspect of such control and licensing law will always be part of a holistic approach to the management of the evening and night-time economy in town and city centres. Once away from the licensed premises, a

minority of consumers will behave badly and unlawfully. The general public needs to be made aware that there is a much broader strategy for addressing these problems than the licensing regime of the Act. There are other mechanisms both within and outside the licensing regime that are available for addressing such issues. For example:

- planning controls;
- positive measures to create a safe and clean town centre environment in partnership with local businesses, transport operators and other departments of the local authority;
- the provision of CCTV surveillance in town centres, ample taxi ranks, provision of public conveniences open late at night, street cleaning and litter patrols;
- powers of local authorities to designate parts of the local authority area as places where alcohol may not be consumed publicly;
- police enforcement of the general law concerning disorder and anti-social behaviour, including the issuing of fixed penalty notices;
- the prosecution of any personal licence holder or member of staff at such premises who is selling alcohol to people who are drunk;
- the confiscation of alcohol from adults and children in designated areas;
- closure notices and orders under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014; and
- the power of the police, other responsible authorities or a local resident or business to seek a review of the licence or certificate in question.

42. These can be supplemented by other local initiatives that similarly address these problems.

#### **43. Licensing hours**

44. With regard to licensing hours, consideration will be given to the individual merits of an application.

- The Council recognises that, in certain circumstances, longer licensing hours with regard to the sale of alcohol can help to ensure that concentrations of customers leaving premises simultaneously are avoided. This is necessary to reduce the friction at late night fast food outlets, taxi ranks and other sources of transport which lead to disorder and disturbance.
- The Council also wants to ensure that licensing hours should not inhibit the development of a thriving and safe evening and night-time local economy.

45. The term “zoning” is used in the Guidance to refer to the setting of fixed trading hours within a designated area. At the moment the Council sees no need to adopt such a policy. The Council has followed the advice in the Guidance and will not be adopting such a Policy within the Borough. However, stricter conditions with regard to noise control will be expected in areas which have denser residential accommodation, but this will not limit opening hours without regard to the individual merits of any application.

**46. Shops stores and supermarkets**

47. With regard to shops, stores and supermarkets, the norm will be for such premises to be free to provide sales of alcohol for consumption off the premises at any times when the retail outlet is open for shopping unless there are very good reasons for restricting those hours. For example, a limitation may be appropriate following police representations in the case of some shops known to be a focus of disorder and disturbance because youths gather there.

**48. Mobile, remote, internet and other delivery sales**

49. The sale by retail of alcohol is a licensable activity and may only be carried out in accordance with an authorisation under the 2003 Act. Therefore, a person cannot sell alcohol from a vehicle or moveable structure at a series of different locations (e.g. house to house), unless there is a premises licence in respect of the vehicle or moveable structure at each location at which a sale of alcohol is made in, on or from it.

50. The place where the order for alcohol, or payment for it, takes place may not be the same as the place where the alcohol is appropriated to the contract (i.e. the place where it is identified and specifically set apart for delivery to the purchaser). This position can arise when sales are made online, by telephone, or mail order. Section 190 of the 2003 Act provides that the sale of alcohol is to be treated as taking place where the alcohol is appropriated to the contract. It will be the premises at this location which need to be licensed; for example, a call centre receiving orders for alcohol would not need a licence but the warehouse where the alcohol is stored and specifically selected for, and despatched to, the purchaser would need to be licensed. These licensed premises will, as such, be subject to conditions including the times of day during which alcohol may be sold. The premises licence will also be subject to the mandatory licence conditions.

51. Persons who run premises providing ‘alcohol delivery services’ should notify the Council that they are operating such a service in their operating schedule. This ensures that the Council can properly consider what conditions are appropriate. Premises with an existing

premises licence, which choose to operate such a service in addition to their existing licensable activities, should contact the Council for its view on whether this form of alcohol sale is already permitted or whether an application to vary the licence will be required. Steps must be in place to ensure that any designated premises supervisor and members of staff involved with the delivery of alcohol to residential addresses are made fully aware of their responsibilities to ensure that no alcohol is sold to persons underage.

## **52. Protection of children from harm**

53. The Body the Council judges to be competent to act as the responsible authority in relation to the protection of children from harm is Halton Borough Council People Directorate: contact details are set out in **Appendix A**.

54. The protection of children from harm includes the protection of children from moral, psychological and physical harm. This includes not only protecting children from the harms associated directly with alcohol consumption but also wider harms such as exposure to strong language and sexual expletives (for example, in the context of exposure to certain films or adult entertainment). The Council must also consider the need to protect children from sexual exploitation when undertaking licensing functions.

55. The Council will give considerable weight to representations about child protection matters. In addition to the responsible authority whose functions relate directly to child protection, the Director of Public Health and Trading Standards may also have access to relevant evidence to inform such representations. These representations may include, amongst other things, the use of health data about the harms that alcohol can cause to underage drinkers and the impacts of parental drinking on children.

56. The Council considers that children and family groups in general should be encouraged to be present in places subject to premises licences unless the environment in those premises (by nature of the activities carried on) is unsuitable. As a general principle, the presence of children and family groups is felt to have a positive influence on the atmosphere within such premises and to produce a more balanced age range within the premises.

57. The Council will not seek to limit the access of children to any premises unless it is necessary for the prevention of physical, moral or psychological harm to them. The Council will not attempt to anticipate every issue of concern that could arise in respect of children with regard to individual premises and as such, general rules will be avoided. Consideration of the individual merits of each application remains the best mechanism for judging such matters.



58. The Act makes it an offence to permit children under the age of 16 who are not accompanied by an adult to be present on premises being used exclusively or primarily for supply of alcohol for consumption on those premises under the authorisation of a premises licence, club premises certificate or where that activity is carried on under the authority of a temporary event notice. In addition, it is an offence to permit the presence of children under 16 who are not accompanied by an adult between midnight and 5am at other premises supplying alcohol for consumption on the premises under the authority of any premises licence, club premises certificate or temporary event notice.

59. Outside of these hours, the offence does not prevent the admission of unaccompanied children under 16 to the wide variety of premises where the consumption of alcohol is not the exclusive or primary activity at those venues. Accordingly, between 5am and midnight the offence would not necessarily apply to many restaurants, hotels, cinemas and even many pubs where the main business activity is the consumption of both food and drink. This does not mean that children should automatically be admitted to such premises and the following paragraphs are therefore of great importance notwithstanding the new offences created by the Act.

60. The fact that the Act may effectively bar children under 16 unaccompanied by an adult from premises where the consumption of alcohol is the exclusive or primary activity does not mean that the Act automatically permits unaccompanied children under the age of 18 to have free access to other premises or to the same premises even if they are accompanied or to premises where the consumption of alcohol is not involved.

61. Subject only to the provisions of the Act and any licence or certificate conditions, admission will always be at the discretion of those managing the premises. The Act includes on the one hand, no presumption of giving children access or on the other hand, no presumption of preventing their access to licensed premises. Each application and the circumstances obtaining at each premises will be considered on its own merits.

62. Certain areas need to be highlighted that will give rise to particular concern in respect of children. For example, these will include premises:

- where entertainment or services of an adult or sexual nature are commonly provided;
- where there have been convictions of members of the current staff at the premises for serving alcohol to minors or with a reputation for underage drinking;
- with a known association with drug taking or dealing;

- where there is a strong element of gambling on the premises (but not, for example, the simple presence of a small number of cash prize gaming machines); and
- where the supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises is the exclusive or primary purpose of the services provided at the premises.

63. It is not possible to give an exhaustive list of what amounts to entertainment or services of an adult or sexual nature. The Council, applicants, and responsible authorities will need to apply common sense to this matter. However, such entertainment or services, for example, would generally include topless bar staff, striptease, lap-, table- or pole dancing, performances involving feigned violence or horrific incidents, feigned or actual sexual acts or fetishism, or entertainment involving strong and offensive language.

64. Conditions, where they are appropriate, should reflect the licensable activities taking place on the premises. In addition to the mandatory condition regarding age verification, other conditions relating to the protection of children from harm can include:

- limitations on the hours when children may be present;
- limitations on the exclusion of the presence of children under certain ages when particular specified activities are taking place;
- limitations on the parts of premises to which children might be given access;
- age limitations (below 18);
- requirements for accompanying adults (including for example, a combination of requirements which provide that children under a particular age must be accompanied by an adult); and
- full exclusion of those people under 18 from the premises when any licensable activities are taking place.

65. Conditions requiring the admission of children to any premises cannot be attached to licences or certificates.

66. Where no licensing restriction is necessary, this will remain a matter for the discretion of the individual licensee or club or person who has given a temporary event notice. Venue operators seeking premises licences and club premises certificates may also volunteer such prohibitions and restrictions in their operating schedules because their own risk assessments have determined that the presence of children is undesirable or inappropriate. Where no relevant representations are made to the Council, these volunteered prohibitions and restrictions will become conditions attaching to the licence or certificate and will be enforceable as such. No other conditions concerning the presence of children on premises may be imposed by the Council in these circumstances.

67. In connection with the protection of children from harm, the responsible authorities include a body that represents those who are responsible for, or interested in, matters relating to the protection of children from harm and is recognised by the licensing authority for that area as being competent to advise it on such matters. The Council is a unitary authority and competent in this area. Applications will therefore not need to be copied to any other competent authority in this area: the Council will liaise where appropriate with its own social services department.

#### **68. Proof of Age**

69. It is unlawful for children under 18 to attempt to buy alcohol just as it is unlawful to sell or supply alcohol to them. It is also an offence for an over 18 to purchase alcohol for an under 18 – this is called proxy purchasing. To prevent such crimes, it may be necessary to require a condition to be applied at certain licensed premises going beyond the mandatory minimum requirements requiring the production of "proof of age" before such sales are made. This should not be limited to recognised "proof of age" cards, but allow for the production of other proof, such as photo-driving licences, student cards and passports. Trading Standards regulate the sale of alcohol to under 18s and can provide advice and materials relating to the prevention of underage sales. They can also provide free staff training.

#### **70. Responsible authorities**

71. A full list of the responsible authorities in the area and appropriate contact details are set out at **Appendix A**.

72. The inclusion of the health service as a responsible authority under the Licensing Act 2003, which occurred in 2012, enables health bodies to have a say in alcohol licensing. The Licensing and Public Health teams work together within the council to ensure that the health impacts of alcohol licensing are considered.

73. As there is not a specific licensing objective related directly to health within the current legislation, health bodies, when making a representation, are most likely to relate such representations to the objectives on public safety and protecting children from harm. This is likely to include the prevention of accidents, injuries and other immediate harms that can result from alcohol consumption, such as unconsciousness or alcohol poisoning. Anonymised data can be collected about incidents relating to specific premises or areas when representations are made.

74. Health bodies hold valuable information which may not be recorded by other agencies, including analysis of data on attendance at emergency departments and the use of ambulance services following alcohol related incidents. Sometimes it may be possible to link ambulance callouts and attendance to irresponsible practices at specific premises.

75. The Director of Public Health is responsible for making representations and observations on applications on behalf of health bodies.

**76 The Portman Group code of Practice on the Naming Packaging and promotion of alcoholic drinks**

77. The Portman Group operates, on behalf of the alcohol industry, a Code of Practice on the Naming, Packaging and Promotion of Alcoholic Drinks. The Code seeks to ensure that drinks are packaged and promoted in a socially responsible manner and only to those who are 18 years old or older. Complaints about products under the Code are considered by an Independent Complaints Panel and the Panel's decisions are published on the Portman Group's website, in the trade press and in an annual report. If a product's packaging or point-of-sale advertising is found to be in breach of the Code, the Portman Group may issue a Retailer Alert Bulletin to notify retailers of the decision and ask them not to replenish stocks of any such product or to display such point-of-sale material, until the decision has been complied with.

78. The Code is an important weapon in protecting children from harm because it addresses the naming, marketing and promotion of alcohol products sold in licensed premises in a manner which may appeal to or attract minors. The Council commends the Code and applicants will be expected to state how they intend to apply the Code.

**79. Plastic containers and toughened glass**

80. The Council has concerns about the dangers of bottles and glasses being used as weapons. It believes that the use of safer forms of glasses can help to reduce injuries and will expect applicants to state in their operating schedule what proposals they have to minimise such injuries through the use of safer forms of glasses, bottles and other means.

81. Consideration will therefore be given to conditions requiring either the use of plastic containers or toughened glass which inflicts less severe injuries. Location and style of the venue, the activities carried on there, and the hours of operation, would be particularly important in assessing whether a condition is necessary: for example, the use of glass containers on the terraces of outdoor sports grounds may be of concern.

## **82. CCTV**

83. The presence of CCTV cameras can be an important means of deterring and detecting crime at and immediately outside licensed premises. Conditions should not just consider a requirement to have CCTV on the premises, but also the precise siting of each camera, the requirement to maintain cameras in working order, and to retain recordings for an appropriate period of time.

The police should provide individuals conducting risk assessments when preparing operating schedules with advice on the use of CCTV to prevent crime.

## **84. Children and cinemas**

85. In the case of premises giving film exhibitions, the Council will expect licensees or clubs to include in their operating schedules arrangements for restricting children from viewing age restricted films classified according to the recommendations of the British Board of Film Classification or the Council itself. The Council has no current plans to adopt its own system of classification.

86. The Act also provides that it is mandatory for a condition to be included in all premises licences and club premises certificates authorising the exhibition of films for the admission of children to the exhibition of any film to be restricted in accordance with the recommendations given to films either by a body designated under section 4 of the Video Recordings Act 1984 - the British Board of Film Classification is the only body which has been so designated – or by the licensing authority itself.

### **87. Crime prevention**

88. Conditions attached to premises licences and club premises certificates will, so far as possible, reflect local crime prevention strategies. For example, the provision of closed circuit television cameras in certain premises. Conditions will, where appropriate, also reflect the input of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

### **89. Counter Terrorism and Public Safety**

90. The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, also known as Martyn's Law, received Royal Assent in April 2025. Although there will be an implementation period of at least 24 months before the Act comes into force, this will be during the current Statement of Licensing Policy. The Act allows the SIA's (Security Industry Authority) new functions to be established, whilst ensuring those responsible for premises and events in scope have sufficient time to understand their obligations.

91. Martyn's Law has been developed to ensure public premises and events are better prepared for terrorist attacks, requiring organisers to take reasonably practicable steps, which vary according to their capacity, to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack and reduce physical harm. Halton Borough Council would expect the licensees to comply with any requirements set out within the Act as and when it comes into force.

### **92. Drugs**

93. The Council recognises that the supply and use of illegal drugs by individuals is not relevant to all licensed premises but it is recognised that conditions may need to be attached to the licences for certain venues if representations are received. The aim will be to endeavour to reduce the availability, sale, and consumption of illegal drugs and to create a safer environment for those who may have taken them. Any conditions will take into account the relevant guidance and advice from appropriate bodies.

The Council expects licensees of all venues to take all reasonable steps to:

- Prevent the entry of drugs into licensed premises
- Prevent drugs changing hands within the premises
- Understand the signs of drug misuse in people so that practical steps can be taken to deal with any instances that occur
- Have appropriately trained staff to deal with drug related incidents.

94. The Council expects licensees to permit the access and use of drug dogs within the public and staff areas of the premises upon request of the Council and/or police involved in such an initiative.

95. The increasing prominence and dangers that can occur from Novel (New) Psychotic Substances (Legal Highs) is recognised and the Council would encourage all venues to include suitable steps within their Drugs Policy to deal with legal highs. The Council will consider whether it would be appropriate to impose a condition in order to promote one or more of the statutory licensing objectives where there is evidence to do so.

#### **96. The control of excessive Alcohol consumption**

97. It is an offence under the Licensing Act 2003 to sell to, or obtain alcohol for, a person who is drunk on licensed premises.

In practical terms this includes:

- Selling an alcoholic drink to someone who you know is drunk
- Buying an alcoholic drink for someone who you know is drunk

98. The Council expects all premises licence holders to take steps to control excessive consumption and drunkenness on relevant alcohol licensed premises. All serving staff should be trained in recognising the signs of drunkenness, how to refuse service and the premises duty of care. The premise should display prominent signage at point of sale that it is an offence to sell alcohol to anyone who is drunk.

99. This will reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour occurring both on and away from the premises after customers have departed. Premises licence holders are expected to be able to demonstrate a general duty of care to customers using their premises and others affected by their activities.

#### **100. Capacity limits**

101. Although most commonly made a condition of a licence on public safety grounds, consideration should also be given to conditions which set capacity limits for licensed premises or clubs where it may be necessary to prevent overcrowding which can lead to disorder and violence. Where such a condition is considered necessary, consideration should also be given to whether door supervisors would be needed to ensure that the numbers are appropriately controlled.

#### **102. Good Management**

103. Certain kinds of physical environment within places subject to premises licences (such as an over preponderance of vertical drinking) are generally thought be less conducive to avoiding crime and disorder. Good management and adequate staff training are vital.

Where appropriate the provision of food in addition to alcohol can have a beneficial effect. Where food is provided it is good practice (but not mandatory under the licensing system) to have regard to current practice on healthy eating. The Council encourages premises licence holders to take an active part in local Pub Watch and Best Bar None and Licensing Savi.

104. Another aspect of good management in relation to door supervision is to have proper systems in place to comply with the Private Security Industry Act 2001 and to think about how good door supervision systems can contribute to crime reduction both within and outside of premises. Applicants will be expected to have considered these and all relevant issues and to reflect these within their operating schedules

#### **105. Cultural strategies**

106. In connection with cultural strategies, the Council will monitor the impact of licensing on the provision of regulated entertainment, and particularly live music and dancing. Only necessary, proportionate and reasonable licensing conditions will be applied on such events. Where there is any indication that such events are being deterred by licensing requirements, the statement will be re-visited with a view to investigating how the situation might be reversed.

107. The United Kingdom ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1976. Article 15 of the Covenant requires that progressive measures be taken to ensure that everyone can participate in the cultural life of the community and enjoy the arts. It is therefore important that the principles underpinning ICESCR will be integrated, where possible, with the Council's approach to the licensing of regulated entertainment.

#### **108. Transport**

109. The Council proposes, through its Local Transport Plan, to develop protocols to be agreed between the local police and other partners that have due regard to the need to disperse people from town centres swiftly and safely to avoid concentrations which produce disorder and disturbance. Applicants will be expected to have considered this issue, and their operating schedule should reflect their proposals for how they might assist in this process.

#### **110. Tourism, employment, planning and building control, and highways**

111. The following matters should be noted in relation to tourism, employment, planning and building control, and highways:



- arrangements have been made for the Council's Regulatory Committee to receive, when appropriate, reports on the needs of the local tourist economy for the area to ensure that these are reflected in their considerations;
- the Council intends to keep the Regulatory Committee apprised of the employment situation in the area and the need for new investment and employment where appropriate;

112. Planning, building control and licensing regimes will be properly separated to avoid duplication and inefficiency. Except in cases where planning permission is not required, applications for premises licences for permanent commercial premises should normally be from businesses with planning permission in place for the property concerned.

113. Licensing applications will not be a re-run of the planning application and should not cut across decisions taken by the Council's Development Control Committee or following appeals against decisions taken by that committee. Nevertheless, applicants should be aware that because the rules applicable and the range of matters to be taken into account are not identical, it is possible for planning permission to be granted and a licence application to be refused (and vice versa) in respect of the same premises. The same applies to the conditions which may be applied to planning permissions and premises licences.

114. Similarly, the granting by the licensing committee of any variation of a licence which involves a material alteration to a building would not relieve the applicant of the need to apply for planning permission or building control where appropriate.

115. Planning obligations under section 106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 warrant special mention. The Council as licensing authority can neither demand that a planning obligation be entered into nor be party to a planning obligation. However, applicants are free to enter into such agreements with the Council as planning authority if they so wish. Such agreements could potentially deal with a wide range of matters such as contributions to town centre policing and litter control.

116. Proper integration will be assured by the Regulatory Committee, where appropriate, providing regular reports to the Development Control Committee on the situation regarding licensed premises in the area, including the general impact of alcohol related crime and disorder. This will enable the Development Control Committee to have regard to such matters when taking its decisions and avoid any unnecessary overlap.

117. The Council's Local Transport Plan is the mechanism by which the Council will work in partnership with all appropriate bodies to deliver effective local transport strategies. Effective strategies will include provision of night-time and evening services, where this is appropriate to the local situation.

118. Where applicants seek premises licences in respect of pavement cafes and the like, they will have to have satisfied the Council (as Highway Authority) of the appropriateness and legality of any proposal prior to any application to the Licensing Authority.

### **119. Promotion of Equality**

120. The Council recognises that the Equality Act 2010 places a legal obligation on public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination; and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons with different protected characteristics.

121. Local authorities are also required under the 2010 Act, to discharge the public sector equality duties. The Council is required by the Equality Act 2010 to publish information at least annually to demonstrate its compliance with the equality duty. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have taken this issue into account.

### **122. Duplication**

123. The Council will avoid duplication with other regulatory regimes so far as possible. For example, legislation governing health and safety at work and fire safety will place a range of general duties on the self-employed, employers and operators of venues both in respect of employees and of the general public when on the premises in question. Similarly, many aspects of fire safety will be covered by existing and future legislation.

124. Conditions in respect of public safety will only be attached to premises licences and club premises certificates that are "necessary" for the promotion of that licensing objective and if already provided for in other legislation, they cannot be considered necessary in the context of licensing law. Such regulations will not however always cover the unique circumstances that arise in connection with licensable activities, particularly regulated entertainment, at specific premises and tailored conditions may be necessary. It should be borne in mind that an alteration is "material" for the purposes of the Building Regulations if it has the potential to affect structural stability, fire safety or access.

125. The Council appreciates that regulations under which a fire safety inspection would normally be carried out do not apply to ships/boats unless they are in dry dock. The safety regime for passenger vessels is enforced under the Merchant Shipping Acts by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency who operate a passenger ship certification scheme. Accordingly, it will not normally be necessary to duplicate the controls imposed through the certification scheme.

126. Certain health and safety issues can be taken into account despite apparent duplication. For example, applicants will be expected to consider the appropriate types of drinking containers (i.e glass or plastic) within premises or parts of premises. This example can only be considered under the crime and disorder heading.

### **127. Standardised conditions**

128. The Guidance states that a key concept underscoring the Act is for conditions to be attached to licences and certificates which are tailored to the individual style and characteristics of the premises and events concerned. This can be important to avoid the imposition of disproportionate and overly burdensome conditions on premises where there is no need for such conditions. The Guidance states that standardised conditions should therefore be avoided and indeed, may be unlawful where they cannot be shown to be necessary for the promotion of the licensing objectives in any individual case. The Council will apply the general principles relating to conditions as set out in the Guidance.

129. The Guidance states that it is acceptable for licensing authorities to draw attention in their statements of Policy to pools of conditions from which necessary and proportionate conditions may be drawn in particular circumstances. The Council considers that standardised wording of conditions (but not universally applied block conditions) are acceptable when dealing with the same or very similar situations.

130. There will be circumstances where no additional conditions may be necessary where existing legislation and regulation already effectively promote the licensing objectives. Where conditions are imposed they will focus on matters within the control of applicants/licence holders.

### **131. Enforcement**

132. The Council has established a protocol with the local police on enforcement issues.

133. In particular, this protocol is intended to provide for the targeting of agreed problem and high risk premises which require greater

attention, while providing a lighter touch in respect of low risk premises which are well run. The Act does not require inspections to take place save at the discretion of those charged with this role. The principle of risk assessment and targeting should prevail and inspections should not be undertaken routinely but when and if they are judged necessary. This should ensure that resources are more effectively concentrated on problem premises.

#### **134. Live music, dancing and theatre**

135. The Council recognises that as part of implementing the Council's cultural strategies, proper account should be taken of the need to encourage and promote a broad range of entertainment, particularly live music, dancing and theatre, including the performance of a wide range of traditional and historic plays, for the wider cultural benefit of communities. Concern to prevent disturbance in neighbourhoods will always be carefully balanced with these wider cultural benefits, particularly the cultural benefits for children.

136. In determining what s should be attached to licences and certificates as a matter of necessity for the promotion of the licensing objectives, the Council will be aware of the need to avoid measures which deter live music, dancing and theatre by imposing indirect costs of a disproportionate nature. It is noted that the absence of cultural provision in any area can itself lead to the young people being diverted into anti-social activities that damage communities and the young people involved themselves.

137. To ensure that cultural diversity thrives, the Council will have a Policy of seeking premises licences where appropriate for public spaces within the community in their own name. This could include, for example, village greens, market squares, promenades, community halls, Council owned art centres and similar public areas. Performers and entertainers would then have no need to obtain a licence or give a temporary event notice themselves to enable them to give a performance in these places. They would still require the permission of the Council as the premises licence holder for any regulated entertainment that it was proposed should take place in these areas.

138. It should be noted that when one part of the Council seeks a premises licence of this kind from the Council in its capacity of licensing authority, the Regulatory Committee and its officers will consider the matter from an entirely neutral standpoint. If relevant representations are made, for example, by local residents or the police, they will be considered fairly by the Committee. Those making representations genuinely aggrieved by a positive decision in favour of the Council application by the Council in its capacity of licensing authority would be entitled to appeal to the magistrates' court and thereby receive an independent review of any decision made.

### **139. Live Music Act 2012 - Live music in licensed venues**

140. Live music is no longer considered to be regulated entertainment in venues licensed for the sale of alcohol for consumption on the premises in the following situations:

- when it is unamplified and takes place between 8am and 11pm; and
- when it is amplified and takes place in the presence of an audience of 500 persons or less and is provided between 8am and 11pm.

141. The premises must be open for the sale of alcohol during the time that the live music is provided for the exemption(s) to take effect.

142. Any condition attached to the Premises Licence relating to live music will cease to have effect in respect of the live music when offered between 8am and 11pm, unless such conditions have been reinstated by the Licensing Authority as part of a Review Hearing.

### **143. Live music in venues which are not licensed**

144. Unamplified, live music has been deregulated between 8am and 11pm in all non-licensed venues.

However, unamplified, live music after 11pm and amplified live music in non-licensed venues will still require formal authorisation from the Licensing Authority by way of a Premises Licence, Club Premises Certificate or Temporary Event Notice (TEN).

### **145. Preparation of Operating Schedules**

146. Applicants are strongly advised to obtain proper professional advice in the preparation of operating schedules and in particular are strongly advised to seek advice from the police on matters relating to crime prevention (including CCTV) to ensure a proper link between Crime and Disorder Strategies and Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategies.

### **147. Contact Points**

**148. Appendix B** gives details of contact points where members of public can obtain advice about whether or not activities should be licensed.

### **149. Administration, exercise and delegation of functions**

150. The Council's Regulatory Committee (and Regulatory Sub-Committees) will carry out all of the Council's licensing functions under the Act except those relating to the making of statements of licensing Policy. A full delegation scheme is in place. The scheme of delegation relating to matters which can be dealt with by the

Regulatory Sub-committee(s) and officers of the Council are set out at **Appendix C**. This follows the recommended delegation of functions set out in the Guidance and is carried forward into the Council's Constitution. Whether delegated powers are exercised on any given occasion is a matter of practice adopted from time to time.

**151. Monitoring/Review**

152. The Council will carry out a review of the statement in accordance with the Guidance and the Act.

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APPENDIX A**LIST OF RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES AND CONTACT DETAILS**

**List of Responsible Authorities (The Council's website should be consulted to check for alterations to contact details)**

<p><b>Relevant Licensing Authority</b> Licensing Section Halton Borough Council Municipal Building Kingsway Widnes WA8 7QF</p>	<p><b>Chief Officer of Police</b> c/o The Relevant Licensing Officer Cheshire Constabulary Headquarters Clemonds Hey Oakmere Road Winsford CW7 2UA</p>
<p><b>Fire and Rescue Authority</b>  Cheshire Fire and Rescue Authority Fire Station Winwick Road Warrington WA2 8HH</p>	<p><b>Public Health Authority</b>  Director of Public Health Halton Borough Council Community and Resources Directorate Town Hall Heath Road Runcorn WA7 5TD</p>
<p><b>Health and Safety Enforcing Authority<sup>1</sup></b>  Director of Public Health Halton Borough Council Community and Resources Directorate Town Hall Heath Road Runcorn WA7 5TD</p>	<p><b>Local Planning Authority</b>  Halton Borough Council Planning Department Municipal Building Kingsway Widnes WA8 7QF</p>
<p><b>Authority exercising functions in relation to minimising or preventing the risk of</b></p>	<p><b>Recognised Child Protection Body</b>  Halton Borough Council</p>

<sup>1</sup> In some cases this may be the Health & Safety Executive. If in doubt please contact the Council.

<p><b>pollution of the environment or of harm to human health</b>          Director of Public Health          Halton Borough Council          Community and Resources Directorate          Town Hall          Heath Road          Runcorn WA7 5TD</p>	<p>People and Economy Directorate          c/o Legal Services          Municipal Building          Kingsway          Widnes WA8 7QF</p>
<p><b>Local Weights and Measures Authority</b>          Principal Trading Standards Officer          Halton Borough Council          Town Hall          Heath Road          Runcorn          WA7 5TD</p>	
<p><b>NOTE</b></p> <p>If the premises are situated in one or more licensing authority areas, send the application and supporting documents to each additional licensing authority.</p> <p>Please check with the Licensing Section if you require further advice.</p>	

**Vessels**

Where applications relate to vessels additional responsible authorities will be involved (depending on the circumstances) as set out below.

- 1) The navigation authority in relation to the waters where the vessel is usually moored or berthed or any waters where it is proposed to be navigated when it is used for licensable activities.
- 2) Environment Agency.



- 3) Canal & River Trust (formerly the British Waterways Board)<sup>2</sup>.
- 4) The Secretary of State for Transport through the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

Advice should be sought from the Licensing Authority regarding the relevant additional responsible authorities.

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<sup>2</sup> The British Waterways Board (Transfer of Functions) Order 2012

APPENDIX B

**CONTACT POINTS WHERE THE PUBLIC MAY OBTAIN ADVICE  
FROM THE COUNCIL**

Council Website [www.halton.gov.uk](http://www.halton.gov.uk)

Email address: [legalservices@halton.gov.uk](mailto:legalservices@halton.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0151 511 8066

Postal Address:

Halton Borough Council

Licensing Section

Legal Services

Municipal Building

Kingsway

Widnes

WA8 7QF

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## APPENDIX C

## SCHEME OF DELGATION

<b>Matter to be dealt with</b>	<b>Full Committee</b>	<b>Sub Committee</b>	<b>Officers</b>
Application for personal licence		If objection made	If no objection made
Application for personal licence with unspent convictions		All cases	
Application for premises licence / club premises certificate		If a representation made	If no representation made
Application for provisional statement		If a representation made	If no representation made
Application to vary designated premises supervisor		If a police objection	All other cases
Request to be removed as designed premises supervisor			All cases
Application for transfer of premises licence		If police objection	All other cases
Application for interim authorities		If police objection	All other cases
Application to review premises licence / club premises certificate		All cases	
Decision of whether a complaint is irrelevant, frivolous, vexatious etc			All cases
Decision to object when local authority is a consultee and not the relevant authority considering the application		All cases	
Determination of a police objection to a temporary event notice		All cases	
Determination of application to vary premises licence by a community premises to include alternative licence condition		If police objection	All other cases
Decision whether to consult other responsible authorities on minor variation application			All cases
Determination of Minor variation			All cases

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**Amendments made to the policy**

<b>Paragraph</b>	<b>Added/Deleted/Amended wording</b>	<b>Comments</b>
The Policy has been renumbered due to changes with in the draft policy		
<p><b>Point 15</b> – The Councils vision as set out within the Corporate Strategy 2018/2020 and within Halton’s fifteen year Sustainable Community Strategy 2011 – 2026 is that;</p> <p>“Halton will be a thriving and vibrant Borough where people can learn and develop their skills; enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality, sustained by a thriving business community; and safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhoods”.</p>	<p>Amended to – The Councils vision as set out within the Councils Framework is that;</p> <p><i>Halton aim to deliver the highest possible standards of work, and look for opportunities to improve where we can, we take steps to understand the needs of our customers, colleagues and stakeholders, ensuring those needs are reflected in how we deliver our services. We encourage and support innovation and creativity to improve service delivery and outcomes.</i></p> <p>PAGE 4 of the draft policy</p>	
<p><b>Point 16</b> – The Council has identified strategic priorities and key themes that are set out in its Corporate Plan 2011-2016 and within its fifteen year Sustainable Community Strategy 2011 – 2026. These are: A Healthy Halton Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton A Safer Halton Halton’s Children and Young People</p>	<p>Amended to – 16. The Council’s vision as set out within the Corporate Strategy 2024 – 2029;</p> <p><i>“Halton will support residents to live in a decent and affordable homes, surrounded by safe and thriving communities, working with everybody to keep our neighbourhoods clean and tidy. Encouraging good quality health and wellbeing. Fostering a strong, diverse local</i></p>	

<p>Environment and Regeneration in Halton Corporate Effectiveness &amp; Business Efficiency</p>	<p><i>economy where there is access to good jobs and successful businesses in our community, providing opportunities for all”</i></p> <p>PAGE 4 of the draft policy</p>	
<p><b>New Point 17 added</b></p>	<p>Inserted a new point 17</p> <p>The Council has identified strategic priorities and key themes that are set out in its Corporate Plan 2024-2029 . These are: Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence,  Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy,  Supporting Children, Young People and Families,  Tackling Inequality, Helping those who are most in need,  Working towards a greener future,  Valuing and appreciating Halton and our community.</p> <p>PAGE 4 of the draft policy</p>	
<p><b>Point 17 – 22</b></p>	<p>Deleted – points 17 -22 have been deleted as they are outdated and replaced with new point 17 as above.</p>	

17. Locally due to the high levels of alcohol-related harm Halton experiences the Halton Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017/2022 includes the reduction in the harm from alcohol as a priority area.

18. The strategy identified a number of issues which may be affected by the licensing regime in Halton including:

A significant proportion of cases of domestic violence are alcohol related

Alcohol related crime and alcohol related violent crimes are worse in Halton than for both the North West and England as a whole

Alcohol specific admissions (both among adults and those aged under 18) are much higher than the national and regional averages.

19. In addition due to the high levels of alcohol-related harm Halton was one of only twenty areas in the country to be awarded the status of being a “Local Alcohol Action Area” (LAAA). This award provided support from the Home Office and Public Health England during 2014/15 related to addressing the harm from alcohol across three areas – health, crime and anti-social behaviour, and diversifying the night time economy.

PAGE 4 of the draft policy

<p>20. Working in collaboration a local alcohol strategy has been developed and agreed. The <i>Halton Alcohol Strategy: Reducing alcohol-related harm across the life course, 2014-2019</i> makes the case that the impact of drinking on public health and community safety in Halton is so great that radical steps are needed to change our relationship with alcohol.</p> <p>21. The vision of the strategy is to:  “Enable people in Halton to have a sensible relationship with alcohol that promotes good health and wellbeing and ensures Halton is a safe place to live”.</p> <p>22. In order to achieve this vision and minimise the harm from alcohol in Halton the strategy will seek to deliver three interlinked outcomes:</p> <p>Reduce alcohol-related health harms  Reduce alcohol-related crime, antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse  Establish a diverse, vibrant and safe night-time economy.</p>		
<p><b>Point 26</b> - and the Sustainable Communities Strategy.</p>	<p>Deleted –this is now point 23 - this is no longer required. This has been updated with the new corporate values</p> <p>PAGE 5 of the draft policy</p>	



<p><b>Point 89-91 – Couter Terrorism</b></p>	<p>Inserted – new section to the policy</p> <p><b>Counter Terrorism and Public Safety</b>  The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, also known as Martyn’s Law, received Royal Assent in April 2025. Although there will be an implementation period of at least 24 months before the Act comes into force, this will be during the current Statement of Licensing Policy. The Act allows the SIA’s (Security Industry Authority) new functions to be established, whilst ensuring those responsible for premises and events in scope have sufficient time to understand their obligations.</p> <p>Martyn’s Law has been developed to ensure public premises and events are better prepared for terrorist attacks, requiring organisers to take reasonably practicable steps, which vary according to their capacity, to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack and reduce physical harm. Halton Borough Council would expect the licensees to comply with any requirements set out within the Act as and when it comes into force.</p> <p>PAGE 16 of the draft policy</p>	
<p><b>Point 103</b></p>	<p>Cheshire Police made comment to the consultation exercise, the wording was updated to removed schemes that no longer exists the reference to <b>Arc-Angel Scheme</b> was removed and replaced with the wording <b>Best Bar None and Licensing Savi. The updated paragraph therefore read:-</b></p> <p>103. Certain kinds of physical environment within places subject to</p>	

	<p>premises licences (such as an over preponderance of vertical drinking) are generally thought be less conducive to avoiding crime and disorder. Good management and adequate staff training are vital.</p> <p>Where appropriate the provision of food in addition to alcohol can have a beneficial effect. Where food is provided it is good practice (but not mandatory under the licensing system) to have regard to current practice on healthy eating. The Council encourages premises licence holders to take an active part in local Pub Watch and <b>Best Bar None and Licensing Savi.</b></p>	
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<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>		
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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Executive Board
<b>DATE:</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2025
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Executive Director, Adults
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Health and Wellbeing
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Joint Health Scrutiny Arrangements – Cheshire & Merseyside: Stage 1 Delegation
<b>WARD(S):</b>	Borough wide

### 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report is to introduce a proposal to delegate the Stage 1 consideration of substantiation variation to health services, where necessary, when Joint Health Scrutiny (JHS) arrangements may apply.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board endorses the proposal for Stage 1 delegation as outlined and recommends for onward approval by Council.

### 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The proposed revised protocol was presented at the Health and Social Care Policy and Performance Board on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025. HSCPPB endorsed the protocol being adopted.
- 3.2 The protocol for establishment of JHS arrangements for Cheshire and Merseyside has been in place since 2014, with the latest review and update of the protocol being undertaken in 2024; presented and agreed at PPB in September 2024.
- 3.3 The statutory framework regarding health scrutiny authorises local authorities individually and collectively to:
- review and scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of the health service; and,
  - consider consultations by a relevant NHS commissioning body or provider of NHS-funded services on any proposal for a substantial development or variation to the health service in the local authority's area.
- 3.4 In line with the protocol, prior to the establishment of any JHS arrangements, each local authority must first of all decide individually whether a proposal represents a substantial development/variation or not (**Stage 1**). The regulations then places a requirement on those local authorities that agree that a proposal is substantial to establish, in each instance, a joint overview and scrutiny committee for the purposes of

considering it. It is then only the statutory JHS committee which can formally comment on the proposals if more than one authority agrees that the proposed change is substantial.

- 3.5 There have been a number of instances over the past 12 months where NHS Cheshire and Merseyside have approached Local Authorities with proposals to change health services and we have been asked to consider these proposals via health scrutiny arrangements.

Not just an issue within Halton, but across a number of other Local Authorities across Cheshire & Merseyside, on a number of occasions the timing of these proposals and the timescales we have been asked to respond to haven't aligned with formal Board meetings.

- 3.6 This issue has been raised and discussed at the Cheshire and Merseyside Health Scrutiny Officers Group and each Local Authority has been asked to consider delegating Stage 1 of the process (as described in paragraph 3.3). For some, this may be to named Members, but in Halton's case it is suggested that it should be via the Lead Officer of the PPB in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the health scrutiny committee, when necessary.

- 3.7 There have been examples in the past where we have had to organise one off Special PPBs to consider whether changes were a substantial change/variation or not, to fit in with timings as outlined/required by health colleagues. Having a scheme of delegation in place would negate this need and only be initiated when timings do not allow for the proposals to be scheduled within the normal round of Board meetings.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The delegation arrangements are considered to be fit for purpose and will assist the Council in upholding the protocol.

#### 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

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

##### 6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

The arrangements are considered to support the protocol and will therefore better assist in upholding the priority.

##### 6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

No specific implications.

##### 6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

No specific implications

##### 6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

No specific implications

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

No specific implications

6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

No specific implications.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There are no risks requiring control measures or a full risk assessment.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no specific implications arising from the report.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no specific implications arising from the report.

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

10.1 There are none within the meaning of the Act.

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