



Corporate and Inclusion Policy and Performance Board

Tuesday, 4 November 2025 6.30 p.m.
Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Armitage'.

Interim Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Robert Gilligan (Chair)	Labour
Councillor Ged Philbin (Vice-Chair)	Labour
Councillor Chris Carlin	Labour
Councillor Sian Davidson	Reform UK
Councillor Rosie Leck	Labour
Councillor Geoffrey Logan	Labour
Councillor Tony McDermott	Labour
Councillor Katy McDonough	Labour
Councillor Angela McInerney	Labour
Councillor Chris Loftus	Labour
Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh	Labour

***Please contact Isabelle Moorhouse on 01515113979 or
isabelle.moorhouse@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Board is on Tuesday, 20 January 2026***

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

Part I

Item No.	Page No.
1. MINUTES	1 - 5
2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion and voting on the item.	
3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	6 - 8
4. EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	9 - 15
5. DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY ISSUES	
(A) UPDATE REGARDING THE HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND AND DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2025	16 - 20
(B) CORPORATE ACCIDENT / INCIDENT REPORT 1/4/25 TO 31/8/25	21 - 32
(C) WIDNES MARKET	33 - 39
(D) PROGRAMMES OFFICE UPDATE	40 - 53
6. PERFORMANCE MONITORING	
(A) PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 2 OF 2025/26	54 - 93

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

CORPORATE AND INCLUSION POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Corporate and Inclusion Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 2 September 2025 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chair), Philbin (Vice-Chair), Carlin, Davidson, Leck, Logan, McDermott, A. McInerney, C. Loftus and N. Plumpton Walsh

Apologies for Absence: Councillor McDonough

Absence declared on Council business: None.

Officers present: E. Dawson, J. Gallagher, K. Butler and I. Moorhouse

Also present: None.

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

		<i>Action</i>
CS11	MINUTES	
	The Minutes from the meeting held on 3 June 2025 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CS12	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.	
CS13	EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
	The Board was presented with the minutes relating to the Corporate Services Portfolio, which had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of the Board.	
	In response to a question from the Board, officers clarified that if something like a community centre was handed to a group from the Council, then they would pay business rates for it, however, if they had charitable status then they would get an 80% relief on rates. Additionally, they could ask the Council for an additional 10% relief on those rates.	

Regarding 'health and leisure in Halton', a Board Member noted that there were no bowling facilities in areas like Victoria Park. They suggested that the Executive Board should look to include all aspects of leisure, especially for the active older generation.

CS14 STAFF SURVEY 2025 - THE NEXT STEPS

The Board considered the results of the 2025 Staff Survey as stated in the report. It was the first staff survey since 2019, and it was undertaken to see how the culture had changed and to try and address any staff issues that had arisen. All responses were anonymous, and work was done to initiate responses from non-laptop using members of staff with ballot boxes. Going forward, the initial responses will be analysed along with the text box answers by the Corporate Workforce Board. The Workforce Board will address the concerns raised by officers with those answers and alongside the directorate surveys going forward, will create an action plan to be rolled out to the whole Council.

The following additional information was provided in response to Member's questions:

- To encourage honest responses answering, anonymously was crucial.
- Responses to the survey came from all directorates were evenly spread and proportion to the size of the Directorate, with no big majority from any directorate. Pay grades were not asked as part of the survey.
- In the next survey, the Board suggested that they ask whether each department had a leadership culture and whether they were happy with it. They also suggested that it is asked how long the staff members had worked for the Council. They were keen to see how different departments understood work culture in their areas.
- In response, officers said that questions alluding to this will be included in other corporate and departmental staff surveys planned with Adults and Children's Social Care. All these surveys will be looked at by the Corporate Workforce Board. The Workforce Board may look at reoccurring issues raised and create a focus group to try to resolve the issues.
- There had not been a staff survey for six years

because it felt inappropriate to ask for responses to their survey during a pandemic and staff priorities would have been elsewhere.

- The Board noted that it was important to show members of staff that their comments made a difference, otherwise they would not respond to the survey again.
- Staff sickness had increased from 2024 because the Council had an ageing workforce who would have some illnesses that younger officers do not and consequently these would tend to be of a longer nature. Stress was the main reason for absence in the workforce.
- The Board reiterated that Officers should try to get more than 25% of the Council's workforce to respond to the next survey. They suggested a 'pulse' survey every 6 months and doing a 'you say we did' with the Working Board.
- There was only a 19% response rate in 2005 but in 2019 there was a 46% response rate which was the highest amount received. Therefore, homeworking did not have an impact. Officers reiterated that they were keen to show staff members that they were actioning their comments.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CS15 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

This item was deferred.

CS16 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR
QUARTER 1 OF 2025/26

The Board considered a report on the performance in the first quarter of the Council term for 2025-2026 which detailed the progress made against objectives, milestones, and performance targets and provides information relating to key developments and emerging issues that have arisen during the period.

It was confirmed that the new Welfare Officers had started in the Benefits Team.

It was noted that there had been a significant improvement with the debt recovery, especially with Adult Social Care where most of the debt was. Additional staff had been brought into Adult Social Care to help resolve the debt issues for clients and families.

The Board suggested that the agency staff usage and costs be reviewed as there had not been a reduction in the usage of them. This was especially the case in Children's Services; however, they had started work around this.

It was agreed that the Head of HR could attend a future meeting present an update on agency staffing and recruitment.

Regarding the One Stop Shops, the Board emphasised the need for these to remain to support service users who were not technologically confident.

Regarding the local market, the Board noted that work needed to be done urgently to try and save it. The Board asked officers to check whether licences were still required for markets.

It was noted that some services are experiencing shortfalls in School SLA (service level agreement) income, meaning that full cost recovery is not being achieved. Consideration is therefore being given by those services as to whether to continue to offer the SLAs

The Board asked what the effect was following savings with school meal provisions on families and increasing green bin costs with fly tipping. A Board Member noted that the previous Area Forum money was split based on which areas had the highest population, and he queried how this would affect these area and community projects.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Corporate
Directorate &
Chief Executive
Directorate

CS17 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 31 MAY

The Board considered a report on the Council's overall revenue net spend position as of 31 May 2025 together with a 2025/26 forecast outturn position. The report was presented by the Director of Finance and only focused on revenue spending. The Executive Board had requested that a copy of the report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board for information, to ensure that all Members had a full appreciation of the Councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility. In presenting the report, it was noted that the Council had to spend in budget by the end of 2025/26, otherwise this will increase the amount of borrowing required under the Exceptional Financial Support arrangement.

It was shared with the Board that the Council overspent by £16 million in 2024/25 but only had £6 million in reserves available to fund the overspend. Therefore, the Council applied for Exceptional Financial Support in December 2024, of which £10 million will be utilised to fund the remaining 2024/25 overspend. The Council has not yet needed to undertake EFS borrowing, as this will depend on the Council's cashflow. Interest rates to borrow from the PWLB (Public Works Loan Board) are high at present at 6.2% over 20 years, therefore the Council will borrow later in the financial year when rates are expected to be more favourable. It was noted that the Council set the 2025/26 with an expectation of requiring a further £29 million of EFS borrowing.

The Board noted that changes to the home to school transport policy could not be implemented before the schools started the new term in September 2025.

In response, officers stated that due to the time taken to undertake the consultation process, the changes would now be implemented from January 2026 for new children and September 2026 for existing children.

Regarding home to school transport, officers agreed to see how many of these pupils had EHCPs (education, health and care plans).

It was noted that the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (Cipfa) will undertake a financial resilience review of the Council during the Autumn, on behalf of MHCLG. They will report their findings to Ministers, for final EFS approval to be granted during February 2026 to enable the Council to set a balanced budget for 2026/27.

Councillor Logan noted that the Children, Young People & Families PPB looked at the results of the consultation on school transport and made recommendations to the Executive Board.

RESOLVED: The Council's overall spending position as at 31 May 2025, as outlined in the report, be noted.

Meeting ended at 7:56p.m.

REPORT TO: Corporate & Inclusion Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 4 November 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Public Question Time

WARD(S) Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 34(9).

1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That any questions received be dealt with.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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

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

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

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

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

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None identified.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None identified.

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

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

None identified.

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

None identified.

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

None identified.

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

None identified.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

None identified.

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

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 None.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None identified.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None identified.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO: Corporate & Inclusion Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 4 November 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Executive Board Minutes

WARD(S) Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The Minutes relating to the relevant Portfolio which have been considered by the Executive Board are attached at Appendix 1 for information.

1.2 The Minutes are submitted to inform the Policy and Performance Board of decisions taken in their area.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Minutes be noted.

3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

5.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

None.

5.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

None.

5.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

None.

5.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

None.

5.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

None.

5.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

None.

6.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 None.

7.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 None.

8.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 None.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.

APPENDIX 1**Extract of Executive Board Minutes relevant to the Corporate & Inclusion Policy and Performance Board****EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2025**

EXB30	NEW RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY
--------------	-----------------------------------

The Board was presented with a revised Risk Management Policy which had been drafted in conjunction with Zurich Municipal, the Council's insurers. The aim of the Policy was to provide direction and alignment to current Risk Management processes across the Council Directorates.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves the updated Risk Management Policy, with the changes outlined in Section 3.3 of the report.

EXB31	EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY
--------------	---

The Board considered a report that set out the development of the Council's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, a copy of which was attached as an appendix. The Policy set out in detail how the Council met its duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

RESOLVED: That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy be approved.

EXB32	2025/26 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 31 JULY 2025
--------------	--

The Board received a report from the Director – Finance, which reported the Council's overall revenue net spending position as of 31 July 2025, together with a 2025/26 forecast outturn position.

A summary of spending against the operational revenue budget position as at 31 July was presented in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 and these provided detailed figures for each individual Department. In overall terms net spending as at 31 July 2025 was £1.629m over budget. The outturn forecast for the year estimated that net spend would be over the approved budget by £5.572m. It was noted that the forecast position remained a matter of great concern and action needed to be taken to reduce net spend immediately.

The report detailed a review of the Council General Reserve as at 31 July 2025 it remained unchanged from the previous period at £5.149m.

Members were advised that Council had previously approved the capital programme for 2025/26 at its meeting on 5 March 2025. Since then, the capital programme had been revised to reflect a number of changes in spending profiles and funding as schemes had been developed. Appendix 4 brought all the separate elements together and outlined the Council's total planned capital programme expenditure.

RESOLVED: 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.

EXB33	MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2026/27 – 2030/31 - KEY DECISION
--------------	--

The Board received a report from the Director – Finance, which included an update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Forecast for the period 2026/27 to 2030/31. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy set out the five-year projection of the Council's resources and spending and was based on the most recent information that was currently available. The forecast showed that it was vital that a significant level of budget saving was achieved over the next five years, the scale of which would be extremely difficult to implement.

It was noted that the Government had confirmed that there would be significant and wide-ranging changes introduced to the local government finance system in 2026/27, known as the Fair Funding Review. The aim of the review was to target funding where it was most needed by using updated funding formulae to determine the different needs and costs faced by individual authorities, as well as their ability to raise revenue locally through Council Tax. A consultation was issued in June with a closing date of 15 August 2025. The potential impact of the Fair Funding Review for Halton was set out in Medium Term Financial Strategy at Appendix 1.

Reason(s) for Decision

To seek approval for the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2026/27 to 2030/31.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

The alternative option of not maintaining a MTFS had been considered. However, this would not follow good financial management practice, as the MTFS was a key element in informing the Council's financial planning and budget setting processes.

Implementation Date

1 April 2026.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Medium-Term Financial Strategy presented in Appendix 1, be approved;
- 2) the 2026/27 base budget be prepared on the basis of the underlying assumptions set out in the Strategy;
- 3) the Reserves and Balances Strategy presented in Appendix 2 be approved; and
- 4) the award of Council Tax Support for 2025/26 remains at the 2025/26 level of 21.55%.

EXB34	FINANCIAL RECOVERY PLAN
--------------	--------------------------------

The Board considered a report of the Director - Finance, which outlined the Council's Financial Recovery position and provided options for the Council to achieve a sustainable budget position by the year 2030/31. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) showed that based upon current levels of spend, income and forecast growth in service costs and demand across the Council, by 2030/31 the cumulative deficit or funding gap on the Council's budget would have reached £118.613m. The position was unsustainable, and action must be taken over the MFTS period to ensure the Council had a balanced budget position by 2030/31 at the latest, removing the dependency upon Exceptional Financial Support. The report set out proposals regarding action that must be taken to ensure this was achieved.

In addition to the financial forecast included with the MTFS, the report provided a summary of two scenarios with a potential budget deficit position for each. Executive Directors were asked to take immediate action to identify the savings, cost control and income generation proposals identified under scenario B.

Members were also provided with detailed information on a benchmarking exercise undertaken to review the Council cost base across a number of services and this was compared to its nearest neighbour group.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) benchmarking information be used to start the process of setting departmental budget reductions for the period 2026/27 to 2030/31;
- 3) Executive Directors supported by the Transformation Delivery Unit provide options for the Transformation Board, regarding how budget reductions on the scale outlined within this report might be achieved, along with details of the associated service delivery implications; and
- 4) Executive Directors identify specific budget savings proposals to be implemented from 1 April 2026 as a matter of urgency, utilising the template in Appendix B, in order to support setting the 2026/27 budget.

EXB35	TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25
--------------	--

The Board considered a report from the Director – Finance, which presented the Treasury Management Annual Report 2024-25.

The report updated Members on the activities undertaken on the money market, as required by the Treasury Management Policy.

Information was provided on the economic outlook, interest rate forecast, borrowing and investments, budget monitoring, new long-term borrowing, policy guidelines and treasury management indicators. The Council's approved Treasury and Prudential Indicators for 2024-25 were set out in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and was attached as Appendix one.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EXB46	PART 2 ITEM: VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE SCHEME
--------------	--

The Board considered a report of the Interim Chief Executive, that provided details of options for the introduction of a Voluntary Severance Scheme.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the options contained in the report in relation to Voluntary Redundancy approvals and the introduction of a Voluntary Severance Scheme; and
- 2) acknowledge that further work to draw up an operational scheme would be required and a report would be brought back for consideration and approval.

REPORT TO: Corporate & Inclusion Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 4 November 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Update regarding the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments as at 30 September 2025

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update regarding delivery of the Government's Household Support Fund and progress with Discretionary Housing Payments between 1 April 2025 and 30 September 2025.
- 1.2 To outline the latest information available regarding replacement of the Household Support Fund with the Crisis and Resilience Fund with effect from 1 April 2026.

2.0 RECOMMENDED That:

- (i) **The updated position regarding the Household Support Fund as at 30 September 2025 be noted;**
- (ii) **The spending position for Discretionary Housing Payments as at 30 September 2025 be noted;**
- (iii) **The latest information regarding the introduction of the Crisis and Resilience Fund from 1 April 2026 be noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Household Support Fund No.7

- 3.1 A report was presented to the Board on 3 June 2025 detailing the spending plan for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 for the Household Support Fund. This report provides an update, setting out the spend position for the six-month period to 30 September 2025.
- 3.2 In summary, spending to date has been as follows.
 - The Discretionary Support Scheme has paid out £44,000 which covers emergency support and community support.
 - Expenditure on free school meal vouchers for the school holidays is now £777,296 which represents 9 weeks of school holidays.
 - Public Health have spent £24,460 helping vulnerable residents.

- Halton Citizens Advice Bureau have spent £56,935 on a range of support for vulnerable residents such as fuel vouchers, food vouchers, and kitchen equipment.
- Children's Services have spent £11,671 in respect of support for Care Leavers.
- Widnes food bank have spent £17,294.
- Runcorn food bank have spent £7,429.
- The Holiday Activity Food Programme have spent £10,000.

The Appendix provides details the updated spend position for the Household Support Fund for the six month period to 30 September 2025.

Discretionary Housing Payment 2025/26

- 3.3 Every year the Government provides the Council with a Discretionary Housing Payment allocation and for 2025/26 the amount provided is £279,321.
- 3.4 Discretionary Housing Payments provide claimants with further financial assistance, in addition to any welfare benefits, when the Council considers that help with housing costs is required.
- 3.5 Discretionary Housing Payments are available to claimants who are entitled to:
- Housing Benefit or
 - Universal Credit and
 - have a rental liability and
 - require further financial assistance with housing costs.
- 3.6 In general, housing costs means rental liability. However, housing costs can be interpreted more widely to include:
- Rent deposits
 - Rent paid in advance
 - Other costs such as removal costs.
- 3.7 The tables below show the amount and numbers of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) awards the Council has made during the six month period to 30 September 2025.

DHP expenditure as at 30 September 2025

Govt DHP allocation	DHP awarded to date	DHP unallocated
£279,321	£136,990	£142,331

Number of DHP awards as at 30 September 2025

	Housing Benefit claimants	Universal Credit claimants	Total
No. of awards	34	243	277

The Crisis and Resilience Fund

- 3.8 The Government is replacing both the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments with a new Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) from 1st April 2026.
- 3.9 The Government states that the CRF will mark a significant shift in how crisis support will be delivered locally, combining emergency support with preventative approaches to build financial resilience.
- 3.10 The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) is currently developing the CRF with input from a small number of local authorities. The DWP have informed local authorities that they are proposing a phased approach to integrating Discretionary Housing Payments within CRF. This means for the financial years 2026/27 and 2027/28 the allocation of DHPs will be maintained at the 2025/26 level.
- 3.11 Further details will be presented to the Board once the DWP issues definitive guidance regarding how the CRF will operate and the Council is informed of its funding allocation for 2026/27.

4.0 POLICY AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 5.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**
- 5.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**
- 5.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**
- 5.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**
- 5.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**
- 5.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

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

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 If the grant allocations from the Household Support Fund and for Discretionary Housing Payments are not fully utilised in accordance with the DWP guidance by 31 March 2026, any remaining grant funding will be clawed back by the DWP.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payment Allocations	DCBL Stadium Lowerhouse Lane Widnes	Paul Garnett

APPENDIX

**Household Support Fund
Spend for the period 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025**

Total Grant Allocation	£ 2,287,475
Less Administration Costs (5%)	114,374
Available Grant Funding	2,173,101
1. Vulnerable Households with Children	
<p>Free school meal vouchers for school holidays: Easter holidays 7th – 18th April 2025 (2 weeks) Half term 26th – 30th May 2025 (1 week) Summer holidays 23rd July – 29th August 2025 (6 weeks) Autumn half term 27th – 31st October 2025 (1 week) Christmas holidays 22nd December 2025 – 2nd Jan 2026 (2 weeks) Half term 16th – 20th February 2026 (1 week)</p> <p>Based upon an estimated 7,500 children entitled to FSM paid for 13 weeks at £12 per voucher per week</p>	777,296
2. Vulnerable Pensioner Households	0
Based on 4,200 pensioner households receiving CTR/HB award of £120 per pensioner	
3. Discretionary Support Scheme	44,000
Accessed by application	
4. Public Health – Other Vulnerable Households	24,460
Contact – Jayne Hardman	
5. Public Health - Pre-school Age Children	0
Contact - Matt Hancock	
6. Care Leavers	11,671
Contact – Emma Wright	
7. Other Vulnerable Households	
Halton Citizens Advice Bureau	56,935
Widnes Food Bank	17,294
Runcorn Food Bank	7,429
Holiday Activity Food programme	10,000
Affordable Warmth – Energy Projects Plus	0
Halton Voluntary Action	0
Total spend	949,085

REPORT TO:	Corporate Policy, Inclusion & Performance Board
DATE:	4 November 2025
REPORTING OFFICER:	Director of HR & Corporate Affairs (Interim)
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Services
SUBJECT:	Corporate Accident / Incident Report 1/4/25 to 31/8/25
WARD(S)	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the performance of health safety management within the Authority for 1st April 2025 to 31st August 2025.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Board notes the contents of the report including the recommendations and actions for 2025/26.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The health and safety report on the performance of health and safety management in relation to Key Performance Indicators for the current financial year is appended.
- 3.2 It highlights health and safety information.
- 3.3 The report includes information around the number of actual near misses, over 7 day and significant accidents.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence - The provision of a safe working environment and reduction in accidents is important in order to provide:
- A healthy Halton;
 - A safer Halton; and

- Efficient and Effective Delivery of Service.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy - None

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families - None

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

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

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

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None identified.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.



CORPORATE ACCIDENT / INCIDENT REPORT
(CORPORATE POLICY AND INCLUSION PERFORMANCE BOARD)

1st April 2025 to 31st August 2025

Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	3
1.1	General	3
1.2	H&S Management System	3
2.	SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	4
2.1	Summary 2025/26.....	4
2.2	Recommendations 2025/26.....	5
2.3	General actions	5
3.	INFORMATION	5
3.1	Local/National Information.....	5
4.	LEAD INDICATORS (KPI's)	7
4.1	KPI 1 Risk Assessments	7
4.2	KPI 2 Near Misses	7
4.3	KPI 3 Lone Working Monitoring System	8
5.	REACTIVE INDICATORS (KPI's).....	8
5.1	KPI 4 Accidents.....	8
5.2	KPI 5 Violent Incidents	9
6.	RISK ASSESSMENT POSITION STATEMENT.....	10
7.	CORPORATE CAUTION LIST POSITION STATEMENT.....	10

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 clearly places responsibility on those who create the risk to manage it. The HSE Strategy “Protecting People and Places: HSE strategy 2022 to 2032” allows for the HSE to adapt and respond to a changing landscape.

The strategy focuses on reducing work related illness, increasing and maintaining trust and enabling industry innovation, and aims to tackle both new and traditional risks, ensuring public safety and supporting the UK’s transition to a carbon- neutral economy.

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

1.2 Health and Safety Management System

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

LEAD INDICATORS - Proactive action taken and any outcomes

KPI

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

REACTIVE [Lagging] INDICATORS - Reactive action taken in response to accidents/incidents

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

Rationale – identify incident trends and actions required to prevent similar occurrences. Encourage all staff to report incidents to give a true picture and enable appropriate mitigations to be put in place.

National and Local Information together with performance gaps and incident trends form the basis for the Recommended Actions for 2025/2026.

By responding positively to identified trends, the Authority can demonstrate compliance with the recommendations of the Health and Safety Executive’s guidance HSG65 “Managing for Health and Safety”.

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

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

2. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Summary

- 2.1.1 Reportable and significant accidents for Halton Employees are currently at a total of 6 across all five directorates plus 0 near misses covering the period that this report refers to.
- 2.1.2 Violent Incidents corporately are showing currently as 19 verbal, 4 physical incidents, 2 threat of violence, and 0 sexual harassment . Within schools for this period there were 1 verbal incident, 32 physical, 0 threat of violence and 1 sexual harassment.
- 2.1.3 Lone Working Contact Centre Monitoring update – A replacement system is now live, and we have data from three month of use April 25 to June 25.
- 2.1.4 Risk Assessments completed on the corporate risk assessment system are 1038 for all directorates. There are currently 653 risk assessments pending / awaiting review / awaiting approval and so a fuller picture will be available in the annual report.
- 2.1.5 The HSE recently released their annual statistics which includes 124 workplace fatalities (24-25 RIDDOR's). Construction, Agriculture and Transportation and Storage are the top 3 workplace categories, a change from Construction, Agriculture and manufacturing in the previous year.
- 2.1.6 Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, also known as “Martyn’s Law” received Royal Assent on 3rd April 2025. The Act places a legal obligation on us to have responsible persons within buildings and to implement robust procedures, comprehensive risk assessments and effective training to ensure preparedness for emergencies, incidents and to reduce vulnerability to terrorist attacks.

2.2 Recommendations 2025/26

The following recommendations are as a result of the accident analysis data for the first half of 2025 from 1st April and will be actioned during the period 2025/26.

No.	KPI No.	ACTION	RATIONALE	RESPONSIBLE
1.	1	All managers and assessors to ensure risk assessments on the corporate risk assessment system across all areas are reviewed and up to date as per safety bulletin 2025.2	Position statements, section 7 below.	All managers and assessors
2.	2	All managers to report near misses on the corporate health and safety system.	Prevention of accidents, suffering and associated financial implications.	All managers - ongoing
3.	3	Ensure staff follow Safe Systems of Work (SSOW) to reduce likelihood of involvement in an accident	Reduction of accidents, suffering and associated financial implications.	All managers - ongoing
4.	1	All authorising officers review corporate caution list entries within the 30-day timeframe, stated in the CCL procedures guidelines.	Prevention of violent incidents and reduction in stress of workforce.	All authorising officers

2.3 GENERAL ACTIONS

Review and update Health and Safety policies (Corporate & Schools) requiring timescale or legislation reviews	Ongoing	Health and Safety Team
School Audit and Health check visit programme	Ongoing	Health and Safety Team
Programme of departmental audits actioned and ongoing for all corporate areas	Ongoing	Health and Safety Team and Team Managers.
Action a series of Lockdown/Bomb Threat Exercises across main Council buildings, some tabletop exercises, some full exercise	Ongoing	Health and Safety Team / Possible new Position/role?
Arrange the Bi-annual Stress survey (to be completed with all staff)	2025-26	Health and Safety Team / All staff

3. INFORMATION

3.1 Local/National Information

3.1.1 Current Key figures for Great Britain (2023/24). Source: HSE.

- **1.7 million** working people suffering from a work-related illness, of which
 - **776,000** workers suffering work-related stress, depression or anxiety
 - **543,000** workers suffering from a work-related musculoskeletal disorder
- **2,257** mesothelioma deaths due to past asbestos exposures (2021)
- **138** workers killed in work-related accidents
- **604,000** working people sustained an injury at work according to the Labour Force Survey
- **61,663** injuries to employees reported under RIDDOR
- **33.7 million** working days lost due to work-related illness and workplace injury
- **£21.6 billion** estimated cost of injuries and ill health from current working conditions (2022/23)

3.1.2 The HSE continue to run a safety campaign entitled “Work Right”. It is primarily targeted at the various tradespersons (employees and managers) engaged in construction and associated activities. The current focus is called “Asbestos and You” which highlights the dangers and the procedures and management requirements when working in areas, suspected of containing asbestos e.g. older buildings. The HSE website now has an information area entitled Asbestos Essentials, where managers, workers and public can access the relevant information. The HSE have created electronic newsletters to enable associated staff to be kept up to date with any new developments.

3.1.3 HSE announced that they would be undertaking spot checks at schools in relation to Asbestos management, to ensure compliance with Asbestos regulations; there have been no reports to the health and safety team of any school visits since the last report. The HSE widened this campaign with at least one local authority within this area getting visits to corporate buildings. None at the time of compiling this report are in Halton.

3.1.4 The HSE has also re-iterated its advice on Violence in the workplace. The estimated number of violent incidents at work fluctuates on an annual basis with no clear trend. The findings from the 2023/24 CSEW (Crime Survey for England and Wales) show:

- The risk of being a victim of actual or threatened violence at work is an estimated 1.1% of working adults being the victim of one or more violent incidents at work, compared to 1.1 % in 2022/23.

- An estimated 279,000 adults of working age in employment experienced violence at work, including threats and physical assault.
- There were an estimated 642,000 incidents of violence at work, comprising of 290,000 assaults and 352,000 threats. This compares to an estimated 649,000 incidents in 2022/23.
- The 2023/24 CSEW found that 1.1% of workers who were men and 1% of workers who were women were victims of violence at work once or more during the year prior to their interview.
- An estimated 60% of work-place violence offenders were strangers to the victim. Among the 40% of incidents where the offender was known, they were most likely to be a client or member of the public known through work.
- The survey found 65.4% of violence at work resulted in no physical injury. Of the remaining 34.6% of cases, injuries described minor bruising or a black eye, or scratches accounted for the majority of the injuries recorded.

HBC has a number of strategies already in place which are reviewed on a regular basis.

Local:

- 3.1.5 Managers of workplace areas continue to be reminded of ensuring risk assessments and training are kept up to date for the safety of staff and compliance.
- 3.1.6 Managers are reminded of their ongoing responsibilities to keep their workplace areas safe and supporting staff welfare (both physical and mental). H&S audits will continue with managers, and the Biannual stress survey will be completed in due course.
- 3.1.7 Retraining of staff continues (e.g. Evac chair). In addition, updated online training packages have been launched on the enable system i.e. fire marshal training package has been included.
- 3.1.8 Managers and staff are reminded of the continuous reporting of violence in the workplace, with HBC having a zero tolerance. Reporting mechanisms and the CCL list are there to assist staff in reducing the risk.
- 3.1.9 As an authority Halton Borough Council has for many years been working on implementing Bomb/Lockdown procedures and policies in all buildings and schools as well as actioning Bomb/Lockdown exercises in main buildings. The HBC Bomb/Lockdown policy was first produced in 2009. Work will be continuing to review and improve this process. In addition, staff have received reminders in relation to staff and building security via the corporate bulletin system. In addition, a number of training sessions for managers and decision maker sessions lead by counter terrorism officers have taken place.
- 3.1.6 Managers are reminded of their ongoing responsibilities to keep their workplace areas safe and supporting staff welfare (both physical and mental). H&S audits will continue with managers, and the Biannual stress survey will be completed in due course.
- 3.1.7 Retraining of staff continues (e.g. Evac chair). In addition, updated online training packages have been launched on the enable system i.e. fire marshal training package has been included.
- 3.1.8 Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, also known as “Martyn’s Law” received Royal Assent on 3rd April 2025. The Act places a legal obligation on us to have responsible persons within buildings and to implement robust procedures, comprehensive risk assessments and effective training to ensure preparedness for emergencies, incidents and to reduce vulnerability to terrorist attacks. Implementation timeframe is 24 months to allow responsible parties to prepare for compliance with the new obligations. The Security Industry Authority (SIA) will be established to oversee

compliance with the Act, establishing a tiered approach based on expected numbers if individuals present, ensuring that security measures are proportionate and tailored to specific circumstances. HBC has recently set up a working group and is currently scrutinizing the guidance to ensure HBC is compliant. Updates will be included in future reports.

- 3.1.9 In addition, staff have had increased awareness of the ACT training package and the Prevent training package which is available online.
- 3.1.10 It is already written in law under the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 under section 2 which places a duty on employers to protect employees whilst at work including in emergency situations.
- 3.1.11 The Management of H&S at Work Regulations 1999 also states under regulation 8 that employers have a duty to have in place procedures for serious and imminent danger.
- 3.1.12 Halton Borough Council, as an employer, works with managers and staff to work towards legal compliance in the above areas.

4. LEAD INDICATORS

4.1 . Number of risk assessments completed on corporate systems

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

- Actual number of assessments **completed** up to 31/08/25 are:

Adult Services Directorate – 193
 Chief Executives Directorate – 310
 Childrens Services Directorate - 249
 Environment & Regeneration Directorate - 227
 Public Health Directorate - 59

See section 7 for position statements and comparisons.

4.2 Number of Near Misses (Corporate)

- 4.2.1 The number reported in the last 3 years are:

2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
3	5	0 (to date)

From the 1st April 2025 to 31st August 2025 there have been 0 near misses reported (HBC employees) on the corporate accident/incident system.

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

- 4.3.1 The upgraded Lone Working System is now operational. Usage data available for period 1st April 25 to 30th June 25

Directorate	Registered users April 25 to June 25	Numbers used April 25 to June 25	Percentage
Adult Services	120	28	23.33%
Children's Services	97	39	40.21%
Chief Executives	16	8	50%
Environment & Regeneration	38	13	34.21%
Public Health	31	13	41.93%
St Helens MBC – Emergency Duty Team	3	1	33.33%
Total	305	102	37.17%

Data has been shared with Directors and will be monitored on a quarterly basis.

5 REACTIVE ['Lagging'] INDICATORS

5.1 Number of Significant and RIDDOR Reportable Accidents

5.1.1 The number of significant accidents and RIDDOR reportable to the HSE for each Directorate excluding schools that took place from 1st April 2025 to 31st August 2025 is 6

Directorate	Specified Injury	> 7-Day	Significant
Adult Services Directorate	2	2	0
Chief Executive Directorate	0	0	0
Children's Services Directorate	0	0	0
Environment & Regeneration Directorate	0	1	1
Public Health Directorate	0	0	0
TOTAL 2025 / 2026	2	3	1
TOTAL 2024 / 2025	0	1	1
TOTAL 2023 / 2024	1	0	4

5.2 Number of Violent Incidents

5.2.1.1 From 1st April 2025 to 31st August 2025

Directorate	Verbal	Physical	Threat of Violence	Sexual Harassment
Adult Services Directorate	1	3	0	0
Chief Executives Directorate	2	0	0	0
Children's Services Directorate	2	0	2	0
Environment & Regeneration Directorate	14	1	0	0

Public Health Directorate	0	0	0	0
Directorate	Verbal	Physical	Threat of Violence	Sexual Harassment
TOTAL 2025/26	19	4	2	0
TOTAL 2024/25	26	15	7	1
TOTAL 2023/24	21	14	Recording of this category commenced 2024	Recording of this category commenced 2024
TOTAL 2022/23	10	7	Recording of this category commenced 2024	Recording of this category commenced 2024

Areas of highest recorded incidents: Leisure services have reported most verbal incidents across both Leisure centres.

There is a decrease in physical violence from previous year, possible under reporting.

5.2.2 Schools

From 1st April 2025 to 31st August 2025 there have been 32 total incidents in schools. One particular school has reported 15 incidents of physical violence, from two students with additional SEN needs. Reported to appropriate staff within HBC.

Schools	Verbal	Physical	Threat of Violence	Sexual Harassment
TOTAL 2025/26	1	32	0	1
TOTAL 2024/25	0	6	1	0
TOTAL 2023/24	4	7	Recording of this category commenced 2024	Recording of this category commenced 2024
TOTAL 2022/23	3	14	Recording of this category commenced 2024	Recording of this category commenced 2024

6. RISK ASSESSMENT POSITION STATEMENT

<u>Directorate</u>	<u>Expected Number of Risk Assessments</u>	<u>Number of completed Risk Assessments</u>	<u>Percentage Completed.</u>
Adult Services Directorate	307	193	51.73
Chief Executives Directorate	431	310	75.76
Children's Services Directorate	516	249	51.71
Environment & Regeneration Directorate	355	227	67.15
Public Health Directorate	82	59	71.95

Overall Total	1691	1038	63.66%

7. CORPORATE CAUTION LIST POSITION STATEMENT

<u>Directorate</u>	<u>Expected subject incident reviews</u>	<u>Outstanding subject incident reviews</u>	<u>Percentage outstanding</u>
Adult Services Directorate		43	28.29
Chief Executives Directorate		1	0.66
Children's Services Directorate		18	11.84
Environment & Regeneration Directorate		2	1.32
Public Health Directorate		3	1.97
Overall Total	152	67	44.08%

Catherine Westwood
Health and Safety Advisor,
Chief executive directorate
4th September 2025

REPORT TO:	Corporate and Inclusion Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	4 November 2025
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director Environment and Regeneration
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Services
SUBJECT:	Widnes Market
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on Widnes Market.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report is noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The market business plan outlines the strategic priorities and actions to be implemented by the market management team to ensure Widnes Market continues to operate as a successful and sustainable trading environment.

- 3.2 The overarching vision is to position Widnes Market as a vibrant shopping destination at the heart of the town centre where customers can access a diverse range of quality products at competitive prices, and where traders are supported to thrive and grow their businesses.

- 3.3 The business plan identifies the following key themes as areas of focus for the market management team:

- a) **Enhancing Digital Presence:** strengthen the market's online and social media visibility to increase engagement and reach.
- b) **Diversifying the Offer:** actively attract new traders to broaden the range of unique and diverse products and services available.
- c) **Community Engagement:** continue to host free public interest events to promote the market to both
- d) **Economic Sustainability:** Ensure the market remains financially viable and resilient as a business model.

- 3.4 The above areas of focus have all been achieved as follows: -

- 3.5 a) A thorough review revealed that social media had been underused as a marketing tool. Market management acknowledged that the previous strategy did not fully leverage its potential. In response, a new approach was introduced, and early data shows promising improvements in reach and engagement. This has led to increased awareness of the market and its offerings.

- 3.6 A comparative dataset highlights the performance differences between the old and new strategies

Comparative Data – Facebook June 2025 – September 2025 v March 2025 – June 2025	
Area	Performance
Views	↑ 133%
Reach	↑ 130%
Content Interactions	↑ 168%
Link Clicks	↑ 118%
Page Visits	↑ 74%
Follows	↑ 182%
Performance Average	↑ 115%

Comparative Data – Instagram June 2025 – September 2025 v March 2025 – June 2025	
Area	Performance
Views	↑ 209%
Reach	↑ 260%
Content Interactions	↑ 351%
Page Visits	↑ 59%
Follows	↑ 65%
Performance Average	↑ 158%

- 3.7 While market management is committed to supporting traders with tools and guidance, individual businesses remain responsible for their own advertising and promotion. To enhance trader support, market management has partnered with organisations including the Business Improvement and Growth Team, Digital Cheshire, and Halton Chamber of Commerce. Though is still in early stages, the programme has begun planning training sessions. In the meantime, one-to-one and drop-in sessions with the new Business, Sales and Marketing Officer have been helping traders improve their social media and marketing skills.

- 3.8 Additionally, the market's free wi-fi has been expanded to fully cover Widnes outdoor market. This upgrade enables easier internet access for traders and visitors, and supports outdoor traders using card payment devices, improving the customer experience
- 3.9 b) Widnes Market continues to offer a diverse and traditional retail experience, featuring long-standing stalls such as butchers, greengrocers, a fish counter, bakery, haberdashery, and fashion retailers. The market also includes homeware products like carpets, curtains, beds, and furniture.
- 3.10 A growing number of niche retailers add to the market's unique character, offering items such as Spanish cleaning products and oriental foods. The market supports sustainability through repair-based services, including mobile phone, laptop, jewellery, vacuum cleaner, and clock/watch repairs.
- 3.11 Recent additions, such as traders selling stationery and baby shower gifts. further enhance the market's variety and appeal to a broad customer base.
- 3.12 Widnes Market has revised its pop-up policy to attract new traders, especially local start-ups and young entrepreneurs. The updated format offers flexible, low-risk opportunities for testing products and business ideas in a real retail setting. This initiative promotes innovation, broadens the market's offerings, and supports grassroots enterprise development across the borough.
- 3.13 c) Free events remain a vital tool for promoting Widnes Market to both consumers and prospective traders. A key focus has been engaging younger audiences through family-friendly activities. The headline event of 2025, 'Marketfest', was the largest and most successful to date, showcasing local artists and community groups, and extending into Widnes town centre with support from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 3.14 Widnes Market is celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2025, marking a major milestone in its longstanding role within the local community and economy. The celebrations will culminate in December with a Victorian-themed Christmas event, blending festive cheer with historical homage. A new logo and the statement "our heritage is the foundation of our future" have been introduced to reflect both the market's rich legacy and its forward-looking vision. As part of the commemorations, several long-standing traders, some active since 1945, will be formally recognised as heritage traders, celebrating their

enduring contribution and entrepreneurial spirit.

- 3.15 Additional events, such as back-to-school promotions, highlighted the market's wide range of relevant products. The annual student market trading day, run in partnership with Riverside College, provides students with real-world trading experience as part of their business studies curriculum, fostering entrepreneurship and strengthening educational ties.
- 3.16 Collaborations with community groups and small businesses help make Widnes Market a safe, inclusive, and culturally vibrant space. These partnerships boost footfall, visibility, and customer trust, supporting trader growth and sustainability
- 3.17 Market management has successfully co-ordinated a series of community engagement sessions throughout quarters one and two of the 2025/26 operating year. These sessions have provided a valuable platform to showcase the work of local organisations from across the borough. Over 50 sessions have been delivered during this period, featuring a wide variety of groups and activities, from awareness-raising stalls to interactive participation events.
- 3.18 Notable groups supported include Halton Sensory, the Methodist Prayer Group, Halton Health Watch, Neil Atherton (Bus Walker), Unlock Runcorn, and The Daniel Adamson. These initiatives have played a key role in promoting community cohesion, raising awareness of local causes, and celebrating the contributions of grassroots organisations.
- 3.19 Market management remains committed to facilitating inclusive and meaningful engagement opportunities that highlight the vibrancy and diversity of Halton's community sector.
- 3.20 d) Widnes Market continues to show strong economic viability, contributing valuable revenue to the Council and maintaining an 82% trader occupancy rate which is well above the national average of 72% (NABMA 2023). This is especially notable given the wider economic challenges facing local markets.
- 3.21 Market management has proactively supported traders affected by changes in business rates, successfully retaining five traders through collaboration with NABMA and a specialist consultant. Broader lobbying efforts for business rates reform are underway and expected to influence future government policy.

- 3.22 A range of incentives is in place to attract and retain traders, including rent discounts for new and expanding traders, low-cost expansion options for outdoor stalls, and a referral scheme. These measures, along with the recent addition of 14 new traders and several expansions, reflect a resilient and growth-focused market environment, despite the departure of 18 traders.
- 3.23 From April 2025, a key performance indicator (KPI) for budget recovery has been introduced as part of the quarterly monitoring reports. This new measure enables more transparent and consistent tracking of financial performance across the service. The results from the first two quarters have been particularly encouraging, with recovery rates of 121.96% and 147.78% respectively. These figures indicate that the market is currently delivering a positive financial return, exceeding budget expectations and contributing a surplus to overall service finances.
- 3.24 Additional areas currently being explored by the Market management team will be presented once the relevant policies and procedures have been developed and are ready for review.
- 3.25 a. Implementation of a Halton Market Rights Policy
- 3.26 Market rights are legal entitlements that allow an authority or organisation to operate a market. These rights can be derived from:
- Royal Charters or Letters Patent
 - Prescriptive Rights (established through long-term use)
 - Local Legislation
 - Part III of the Food Act 1984 – a modern statutory framework often used by local authorities
- 3.27 Key Objectives:
- Protect existing market operators from competition that could undermine their viability.
 - Clarify the legal basis under which a market operates.
 - Ensure transparency and fairness in market operations and any new market proposals.
- 3.28 b. Implement a young entrepreneurs scheme as part of a broader initiative by the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) to engage and support young people in market trading and enterprise.
- 3.29 It's designed to revitalise markets by encouraging youth participation, fostering entrepreneurship, and creating vibrant community hubs.

3.30 Key Objectives:

- Encourage young people to explore market trading as a viable career or business path.
- Collaborate with schools, colleges, and training providers to offer enterprise experiences.
- Support youth-led market events and initiatives across the UK.
- Provide resources and best practice guidance for market operators working with young entrepreneurs.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Market Rights Policy Development

The report details s future plans to implement a Halton Market Rights Policy (3.4) to clarify legal entitlements and protect existing operators.

This will require formal adoption and governance approval for implementation.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 As set out in 3.3 the market currently achieves in excess of full budget recovery.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Health-focused community groups such as Halton Health Watch and Halton Sensory, which raise awareness of local health services and issues.

Access to fresh produce through traditional stalls (e.g., greengrocers, fish counters), contributing to healthier lifestyle choices.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The Pop-up Policy supports local start-ups and young entrepreneurs, offering low-risk entry into retail.

Collaboration with Business Improvement and Growth Team, Digital Cheshire, and Halton Chamber of Commerce provides traders with access to training and support.

The Young Entrepreneurs Scheme aligns with NABMA's national initiative to foster youth enterprise and career pathways in market trading.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Student Market Trading Day in partnership with Riverside College provides real-world enterprise experience for students, directly supporting youth development and employability.

Family-friendly events such as 'Marketfest' and seasonal promotions engage younger audiences and promote positive community interaction.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

Encouraging businesses to make essential products and services more accessible and affordable, especially for low-income and marginalized communities.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

Inclusive and culturally vibrant spaces created through community partnerships.

Events and engagement activities that promote positive social interaction and community cohesion

7.0 Risk Analysis

7.1 There are no risks identified.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None identified.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None identified.

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

'None under the meaning of the Act.'

REPORT TO:	Corporate and Inclusion Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	4 November 2025
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director Environment and Regeneration
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Services
SUBJECT:	Programmes Office Update
WARD(S)	Boroughwide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide an annual update to Corporate PPB on the work of the Programmes Office in securing and managing external funding resources.

The Report covers the following areas:

- An update on the Programmes Office key activities and priorities
- Funding statistics for the period 2024-25

2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 **Role of the Programmes Office**

- 3.2 The Programmes Office role is to help maximize external funding into the Borough and to undertake the monitoring for large-scale grant programmes to ensure compliance and eliminate clawback.

- 3.3 Formerly the External Funding Team, The Programmes Office was established in October 2022 and consists of the following posts:

- Programmes Office Manager
- Senior Funding Development Officer
- Funding Development Officer
- Senior Monitoring Officer
- Funding and Monitoring Officer
- Funding and Monitoring Officer 0.5
- Funding Support Assistant
- Promotions Officer 0.5 - currently delivered by an agency

- 3.4 The Team is responsible for preparing medium to large-scale funding bids (primarily over £50,000) on behalf of Council

colleagues, public sector partners, the voluntary sector and the private sector, with the aim of maximising external funding opportunities for Halton, focusing on key sources including: Government, National Lottery, Landfill Funding, Trusts and Foundations.

3.5 Current examples include UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), Town Deal Fund, Plan for Neighbourhoods.

3.6 Key functions of the Team include:

- Drafting or proofing of large-scale grant funding bids.
- Monitoring of strategic grant programmes, including the submission of claims, in order to ensure compliance and eliminate clawback.
- Maintaining a strategic approach to funding to ensure the most appropriate bids from Halton are submitted and internal competition is averted.
- The development of strategic project pipelines, for example, housing, regeneration, climate change and profile of these with key funders, Combined Authority, central Government etc.
- The operation and review of a Project Management System to ensure consistency of delivery and risk aversion on key schemes.
- Undertaking funding searches for specific projects; bid writing and development of supporting documents, e.g. policies and business plans etc.
- Dissemination of funding information to target audiences, mainly via the production of monthly Funding Bulletins on a range of themes.
- Lobbying funders, developing strong relationships with key funding bodies, and participating in key forums to ensure Halton gets its fair share of funding.
- Developing strong partnerships with Council colleagues, and the voluntary and private sectors where appropriate, to submit joint bids.
- Develop and deliver a training programme for HBC colleagues and partner organisations to enable capacity building.
- The delivery of secretariat support for a number of Boards which oversee funding schemes, e.g. Runcorn Town Neighbourhood Board.
- The delivery of a Communication Programme for key schemes, including Town Deal, UKSPF and Plan for Neighbourhoods.
- Leading on the delivery of Visitor Economy work for Halton, including the Visit Halton website, a Marketing Halton Board and the delivery of an annual campaign programme.

3.7 **Key Priorities 2024-25**

3.8 Emphasis over the period has been on:

- The introduction of a comprehensive Project Management System to support the delivery and management of large-scale regeneration projects.
- The introduction of a strategic pipeline function which will ensure Halton has a portfolio of projects ready to access funding sources and which are understood by key bodies, including the CA.
- Supporting the delivery of a range of Government-funded programmes, including Towns Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Plan for Neighbourhoods through a monitoring/compliance function and secretariat role.
- Delivering a Destination Marketing programme, which is part of an LCR-wide funded scheme, to promote Halton's visitor economy and cultural assets to both residents and visitors
- Supporting the development of the Halton's Culture26 programme – a year of cultural activity funded through LCR.

3.9 The Team continues to look at how we can further support HBC colleagues to bid for funding for priority schemes in order that we do not miss out on any appropriate funding streams.

3.10 **Key Projects and Team Stats**

3.11 **Key Projects**

3.12 This section outlines a number of key projects that the Programmes Office are delivering and/or monitoring:

- i) Project Management System implementation
- ii) UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programme – Year 4
- iii) Reconnecting Runcorn - Towns Fund Programme
- iv) Plan for Neighbourhoods Runcorn

i) Project Management System

ii) UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) – Year 4

3.13 UKSPF is a Government funding scheme allocated through the Combined Authority from April 2022-March 2026 and seen as a 'replacement' fund once the European Funding Programme ceased when the UK left the European Union.

3.14 Halton receives a 7.9% allocation of the Combined Authority pot, and the funding is split into capital and revenue. A breakdown of the Year 4 funding is detailed below:

- 3.15 Employment Support Programme - £347,805
 Business Support Programme - £121,423
 Communities and Place Programme - £297,439 comprising
 Widnes Town Centre, a Cultural programme and a Visitor
 Economy/Place programme.
- 3.16 Strands are led by relevant project leads across HBC and the
 Programmes Office is driving and monitoring spend and progress
 against outputs/outcomes.
- 3.17 This will be the last year of UKSPF funding, and we await details
 of the Integrated Settlement for the LCR which will determine
 funding streams from April 26.

iii) Town Deal – *Reconnecting Runcorn*

- 3.18 The *Reconnecting Runcorn* programme is a Government
 allocation of £23.6 million running to March 2026 for the
 redevelopment/connectivity of the Old Town area of Runcorn.
 Funding is drawn down based on a spending profile or forecast
 and monitoring reports are required to be submitted to
 Government in May and November.
- 3.19 The programme is split into 8 strands, and a useful map has
 been created to demonstrate the range of projects and the
 additional investment drawn in on the back of the Town Deal
 funding – see Appendix 2.
- 3.20 For further information and regular updates, please visit
 www.reconnectingruncorn.info
- 3.21 A more detailed report on the Town Deal programme is due to be
 presented to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and
 Performance Board's September meeting.

iv) Plan for Neighbourhoods Runcorn

- 3.22 An additional £20m has been allocated to Runcorn for the period
 2026-2036. The funding will be split out over the 10 years and
 includes both capital and revenue. Government requires a Vision,
 Regeneration Plan and Investment Plan by the end of November.
- 3.23 The Runcorn Town Neighbourhood Board (RTNB) is instrumental
 in the management of the funding; a subgroup of the board has
 been established to help develop the plans for Government and
 the portfolio of projects and this will be ratified by full Board prior
 to submission to MHCLG. Programmes Office is managing this
 process.
- 3.24 **Other work supported in 2024-25**

- An increase in our monthly average enquiries from 5 to 6
- Supported 59 organisations with funding searches
- Developed 30 bids for HBC or external groups of which 11 have been successful so far
- Supported 26 colleagues or community members with training on bid development, developing fundraising strategy, monitoring & evaluation
- Developed and distributed a monthly funding bulletin for the community
- Developing a National Lottery Heritage Fund bid for a project to celebrate the early life of Lewis Carroll who was born in the Borough at Daresbury

3.25 **Capacity and Demand**

3.26 Demand for the service remains steady; the Team received 39 requests for funding in 2024-25. This is lower than the previous year; however, the team is working more strategically on fewer bids but offering more in-depth support.

3.27 The Team works to full capacity which means decisions need to be made at times about where to allocate support, allowing the ability to respond to new enquiries and priorities, manage tight deadlines for bids, horizon scan to ensure opportunities are not missed etc.

3.28 Importantly, the Team does not drive projects, but specialises in sourcing funding, bid-writing and monitoring, acting as a critical friend or compliance checker.

3.29 Funding bids submitted in 2024-25 by the Programmes Office totalled £1.6m; this is lower than usual as the workload emphasis has been on supporting with funding streams where Halton has received as an allocation, e.g. UKSPF and Plan for Neighbourhoods, and on the monitoring of large-scale grants, e.g. Towns Fund.

3.30 See Appendix 3 for Programmes Office statistics.

3.31 **Community and Voluntary Sector**

3.32 The Programmes Office maintains a remit to support voluntary and community sector organisations to secure funding to support their services as well as help deliver Halton's strategic priorities.

3.33 Projects supported between April 24 and now include:

Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum – External Repairs/ Restoration

Lewis Carroll Visitor Centre – Curious About Carroll – Culture 26 project
St Michaels AFC – New Club House
St Paul’s Church Transform – St Paul’s Tower Repair & Restoration
Wat Phra Singh Temple – new Ubosot Hall
Trinity Safe Space – New Venue and Service
Norton Priory – Walled Garden/Courtyard Restoration
Open 360 – monitoring of Lottery grant
Runcorn ABC – New Venue and Service

- 3.34 Work has commenced on a Strategic Partnership Group that includes HBC Officers from Programmes Office, Community Development, Business Support and Supports Development, with senior officers from the Voluntary and Community Association (VCA). The purpose of the partnership is to ensure a more co-ordinated approach to supporting the voluntary sector and less duplication of effort.

3.35 **Liverpool City Region Cultural and Visitor Economy work**

- 3.36 The Team continues to undertake some key work with Liverpool City Region (LCR) and Halton partners in relation to Visitor Economy and Culture.

- The Programmes Office sits on the LCR Destination Management Board and is currently delivering the Destination Halton programme and fed into the development of an LCR Destination Management Plan (DMP).
- The team is overseeing the development of a Place Strategy which will bring together regeneration, inward investment and visitor economy/tourism/culture into a targeted strategy and marketing programme.
- The Team supports Cultivate: Halton’s cultural partnership with funding bids to deliver a quality arts and cultural programme for people in Halton and is supporting the programme of activity for Culture 26 through securing grant funding.
- The Programmes Office Manager sits on the LCR Culture Officers Group which delivers LCR-wide cultural events and helps drive the Boroughs of Culture programme.
- The Programmes Office Manager played a key role in the development of Halton’s Cultural Strategy published in 2023 and which is critical in securing funding via the Arts Council of England and National Lottery Heritage Fund.

3.37 **Training**

- 3.38 The Team has traditionally delivered a free training programme which is available to HBC colleagues and externally to the

voluntary and other public sector partners which consists of the following sessions:

- Top Tips for Bid-Writing
- Monitoring and Evaluating your Grant
- Now You've Got Your Grant
- Developing a Fundraising Strategy.

3.39 The training sessions are continually updated to improve bid-writing skill levels among both internal and external colleagues and also give a greater understanding of the context in which funding bids are submitted, helping to ensure that bids are prioritised and of the highest possible quality.

3.40 The Team has prioritised delivery to HBC colleagues and ran a number of sessions in April/May and these will be repeated in October/November; we also offer bespoke courses to individual teams or organisations.

3.41 **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

3.42 The Team's workload remains extremely busy; we continue to prioritise funding that has emerged through the Government's funding agenda, as well as funding opportunities via the Combined Authority, in order to support HBC's priorities and to ensure Halton bids for these funds where appropriate. At the same time, we will continue with our remit to support our voluntary sector colleagues to secure funding to deliver their vital services across the Borough.

3.43 The external funding environment remains vibrant, if not competitive, and we look forward to securing further investment into the Borough in the year ahead to support the corporate priorities and key strategic schemes going forward.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None

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

All projects that request support from the Programmes Office must be supporting at least one of the Council's priorities.

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

The Programmes Office supports projects that aim to improve the

health and wellbeing of residents.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The Visitor Economy work that the Team undertakes aims to promote Halton's assets, helping to increase the spend by visitors in the Borough to support local venues and businesses.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The Programmes Office supports projects that aim to provide help for children, young people and families.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The Programmes Office supports projects that aim to help those most in need across the borough.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

The Team supports the Climate Change Action Plan work producing a funding matrix that will support the delivery of the activities in the Action Plan and also supports a number of projects that are aiming to improve the quality of green spaces and residents' experiences.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The Destination Marketing work that the team leads on is working to promote Halton's assets to local residents, celebrating the heritage, art, culture and green spaces in the Borough

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

The Team supports the Climate Change Action Plan work producing a funding matrix that will support the delivery of the activities in the Action Plan

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

None under the meaning of the Act.

Reconnecting
RUNCORN

PROJECT MAP

RIVER MERSEY

TOTAL INVESTMENT

£43.8M

TOWN DEAL GRANT AWARDED

£23.6m



Appendix 2: Town Deal and UKSPF Overview

i) Town Deal – *Reconnecting Runcorn*

The *Reconnecting Runcorn* programme is a Government allocation of £23.6 million running initially to March 2026 (now extended to March 2028) for the redevelopment/connectivity of the Old Town area of Runcorn. Funding is drawn down based on a spending profile or forecast and monitoring reports are issued in May and September.

1. Elite House – Runcorn Station Quarter Enterprise Hub

The Council has entered into pre construction service agreement with F Parkinson through a design and build procurement route.

They will be responsible for developing a RIBA Stage 3 coordinated design and providing cost certainty during RIBA Stage 4 as they carry out early supply chain engagement. Discussions with interested operator are ongoing. Additional funding is currently being sourced via the Combined Authority and the Ineos Energy from Waste grant, to make the building energy efficient using rooftop solar.

2. Unlock Runcorn – Landscaping, Visitor Centre and Canal Boat Trip experience

Runcorn Locks Restoration Society have taken delivery of the first boat Aethel. A public launch event was held in July with the first paying trips taking place in September. This also saw the unveiling of the Duke Street art project. Connections have been made with Norton Priory to discuss the possibility of trips incorporating the museum. Delivery of the second boat is expected imminently and work is now underway for the next phase of the project – the visitor centre & landscaping.

3. Brindley Theatre Enhancements – extended café, library and outdoor performance area

The Brindley extension started on site August 2024, with the new drainage in place, including large attenuation tank built, foundation for extension put down, steelwork up and new floors put in. Roof of extension made, and staircases installed and internal metal sections progressing the fit out. The building is now water tight and completion is expected spring 2026.

4. Creative & Digital Skills Centre

Hazlehurst Arts Collective is now well established at 71a High Street, offering a varied and successful programme of events and workshops. 18 artists have taken up residence. The digital and IT hub in the Camden buildings is currently in design.

The youth centre, also part of the Creative and Digital Skill centre, started September 2024, with the new build now well advanced including all external facades, and most steelwork in the wintergarden in place. Steel work on the wintergarden has now progressed up to roof level, whilst the

new built has seen internal walls plastered and services first and second fittings done.

5. Town Centre New Homes – High Street

The over 55s apartment block under construction at High Street now has all doors and windows in, and external brickwork is going up.

6. Health & Education Hub

The Health Hub started work on site April 2025, after the library vacated to temporary location. The steelwork for the mezzanine is up, following installation of drainage. Joisted floor of mezzanine and plywood fitted, all internal partitions in metal sections made and plaster boarding started, steel staircase installed, and all services work started. It is anticipated works will be completed by the end of 2025.

7. High Street Connectivity

Following a project creating a range of heritage stories, a booklet has been published. The street art has been completed and a celebration event was held in July 2025.

Public realm works on High Street will be progressed towards the end of the programme.

8. Town Centre New Homes – Rutland Street

The Community Land Trust are in the process of commissioning capacity support for the design stage of this scheme.

The Programmes Office team is responsible for the reports to Government on the progress of projects and spend; meets regularly with Government reps to discuss the funding, provides secretariat support for the Board, and manages the communication and publicity for the programme.

ii) UKSPF

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is part of the government's funding agenda and offers significant support for places across the UK.

This is the fourth and final year of the funding programme. The Programmes Office team is responsible for the monitoring of the various strands of the funding, collating evidence of all expenditure and completing quarterly claims which are subject to internal audit and verification by the combined authority.

Funding issued in April 2025 covers the following strands:

Place Based Business Support – Offering support & advice to existing local businesses and new startups.

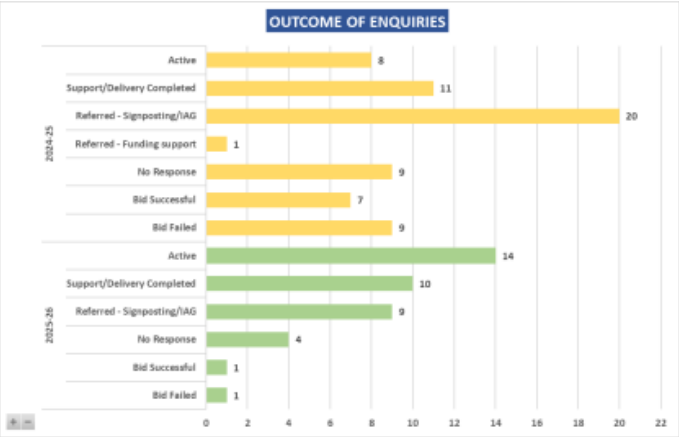
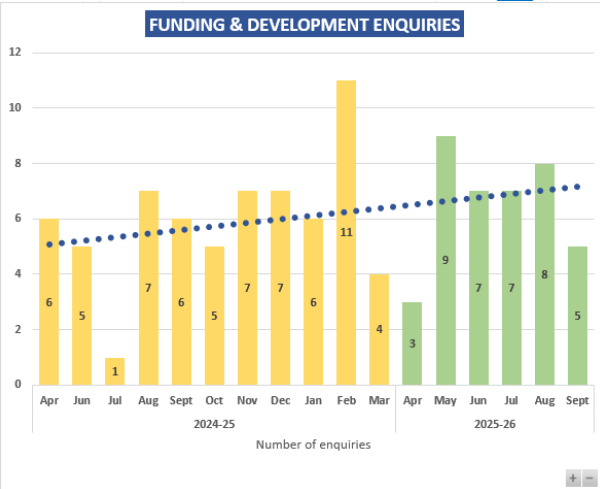
Ways to Work - An employment support programme for hard to reach adults, providing coaching training and job search assistance.

Visitor Economy – Aiming to showcase the Borough's assets for both residents and visitors.

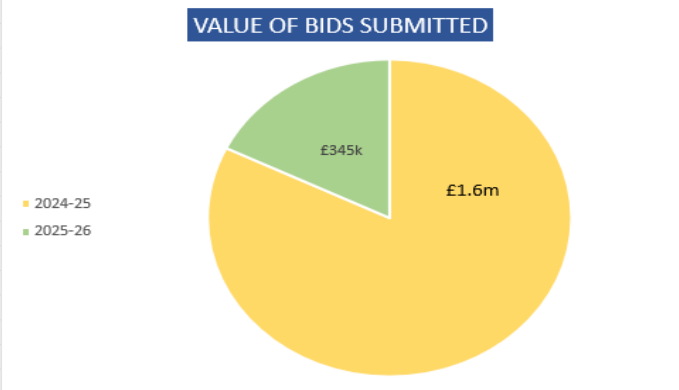
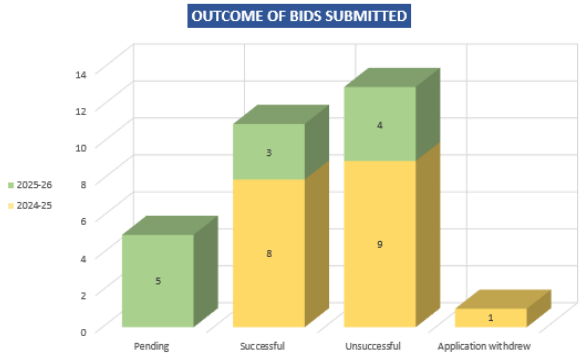
Cultural Delivery – Offering support to local creative industries to deliver cultural activity for the community.

Widnes Town Centre – capital and revenue funding to kickstart some of the Widnes Strategic Framework projects.

Programmes Office 2025/26



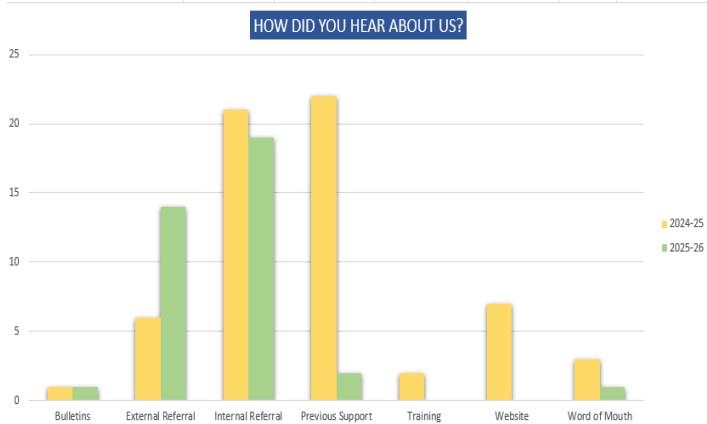
Enquiries have had a steady increase with an average of 6 per month, of which all have been fully supported with information, advice and guidance, access to training sessions, funding searches, referral to other services, bid development support and a monthly funding bulletin.



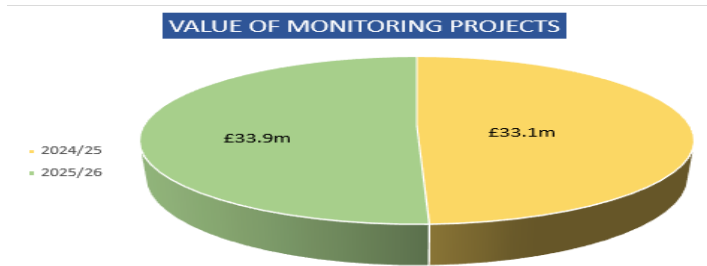
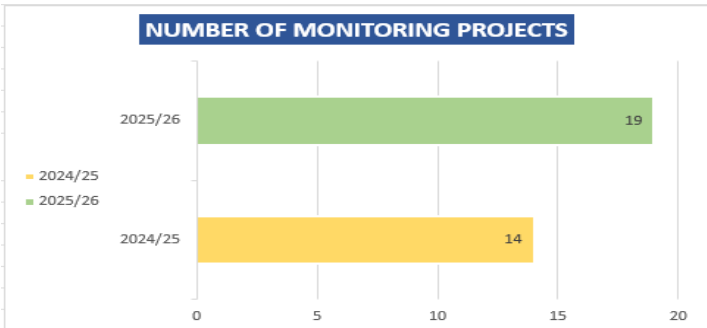
Programmes Office supported 18 organisations with bid development within this financial year, so far bids to the value of £1.6 million have been submitted and the team is currently working with other organisations on bids of a similar value.



Programmes Office 2025/26



Although the number of enquiries and bids developed has increased in the last financial year, much of the team's resource has been focused on strategic projects, supporting colleagues across the department. The graphs also demonstrate the sources of enquiries received over the period.



The Programmes Office is also undertaking monitoring support for 19 organisations and projects to the value of £33.9m; this support includes claims, evaluation, monitoring, servicing Board meetings and liaison with funding bodies.



REPORT TO:	Corporate and Inclusion Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	4 November 2025
REPORTING OFFICER:	Director of HR & Corporate Affairs (Interim), Chief Executive's Delivery Unit
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Services
SUBJECT:	Performance Management Reports for Quarter 2 of 2025/26
WARD(S)	Boroughwide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To consider, and to raise any questions or points of clarification, in respect of performance management for the second quarter period to 30th September 2025.
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2025-26 were agreed by Members for the various functional areas reporting to the Board as detailed below:
- Finance
 - Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit
 - ICT and Administrative Support
 - Legal and Democracy
 - Catering, Stadium and Registration Services
 - Property Services

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

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the Policy & Performance Board:**

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

Board.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 All Key Performance Indicators relate directly to the following Council's priorities:

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

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

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

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 None identified.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None identified.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.

Corporate and Inclusion Policy and Performance Board – Quarter 2

Reporting Period: 1st July – 30th September

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress against key service objectives/milestones and performance targets, during the second quarter of 2025/26 for service areas within the remit of the Corporate & Inclusion Board.
- 1.2 It covers key priorities for development or improvement in the various functional areas reporting to the Board in relation to the Council's priority of Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency i.e.:
- Finance
 - Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit
 - ICT Infrastructure
 - Legal and Democracy
 - Catering, Stadium and Registration Services
 - Property Services
- 1.3 The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress to date is explained within Section 5 of this report.

1.4 Corporate Priorities



Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029
Our Community, Our Priorities, Our Future

Plan on a Page



2.0 High Priority Equality Actions

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

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


3.0 Performance Overview

- 3.1** Key Performance Indicators across the key business areas that have been identified by the Directorate.
- 3.2** It should be noted that given the significant and unrelenting downward financial pressures faced by the Council there is a requirement for Departments to make continuous in-year adjustments to the allocation of resources in order to ensure that the Council maintains a balanced budget.
- 3.3** Whilst every effort continues to be made to minimise any negative impact of such arrangements upon service delivery they may inevitably result in a delay in the delivery of some of the objectives and targets contained within this report.

Finance


Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
FS01	Higher proportion of council tax income due for the year to be collected compared to the previous year


Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the in-year collection rate will be compared to the same point of the previous year		<p>Council tax collection for the period ending 30 September 2025 is 53.71% which is 0.11% down on the same period for last year.</p> <p>Debt relating to previous years continues to be collected, the Council utilises powers through charging orders and attachment to earnings/benefits to secure debts.</p>

		<p>£1.634m has been collected in relation to previous year debt, equivalent to 8.35% of outstanding debt as at 31 March 2025. This is an improvement of £0.263m compared to the same period in 2024/25.</p> <p>For 2024/25 the Council's in-year council tax collection rate was 93.98% which compares to the national collection rate of 95.9%. Council tax collection rates are impacted by deprivation, where it is evidenced the higher the deprivation the lower the collection rate. Despite this Halton outperforms a number of unitary and met authorities who have a lower deprivation ranking.</p>
--	--	--


Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
FS02	Higher proportion of business rates income due for the year to be collected compared to previous year

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the in-year collection rate will be compared to the same point of the previous year		<p>Business rate collection for the period ending 30 September 2025 is 58.6% which is 0.16% lower than the collection rate at the same point last year.</p> <p>Despite the collection rate being lower on the same point last year it is worth noting 2024/25 collection rates were the highest in over a decade. The collection rate at 30 September 2025 remains high and is the third highest collection rate over the past decade.</p> <p>£0.736m has been collected in relation to previous year debt.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priority 4 - Tackling inequality and helping those who are most in need
FS 03	Reducing the average time for processing new Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claims by 1 day, compared to the previous year, to an average of 21.65 days.


Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the same quarter last year (Q1 2024/25 20.83 days).		<p>Q2 2025-26 25.01 days Q1 2025-26 27.26 days Q4 2024-25 18.97 days Q3 2024-25 18.94 days Q2 2024-25 19.58 days Q1 2024-25 20.83 days</p> <p>In the second quarter there has been an improvement of over two days in the speed of processing for new claims compared to quarter one. The Benefits Service has recruited three Benefit Officers in August 2025 and they should have a positive impact on processing times later in the year. At this stage of the year, it is too early to predict whether the target of 21.65 days will be achieved.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are most in need
FS 04	Reducing the average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction by 1 day, compared to the previous year, to an average of 8.55 days.


Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the same quarter last year (13.70 days).		<p>Q2 2025-26 19.17 days Q1 2025-26 14.30 days Q4 2024-25 9.16 days Q3 2024-25 12.19 days Q2 2024-25 15.62 days Q1 2024-25 13.70 days</p>

		<p>The performance for changes in circumstances has deteriorated in quarter two compared to quarter one in part because of the large number of transactions being sent by the DWP in respect of council tax reduction claims. The volume of these transactions varies throughout the year and in quarter two the numbers were high. The Benefits Service has recruited three Benefit Officers in August 2025 and they should have a positive impact on processing times later in the year. At this stage of the year it is too early to predict whether the target of 8.55 days will be achieved.</p>
--	--	---

Corporate Priority	Priority Two - Building a strong, sustainable, local economy
FS 05	Ensuring 90% of all suppliers' invoices are paid within 30 days, including those which are disputed invoices.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the proportion of suppliers' invoices paid within 30 days will be assessed		<p>As of the end of Quarter 2, 91.22% of the Council's supplier invoices for the current financial year were paid within 30 calendar days of receipt. This marks a slight improvement compared to Quarter 1, where the figure stood at 90.92%.</p> <p>This performance reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to prompt payment practices, which help foster positive and reliable relationships with suppliers. It is important to note that this metric includes all invoices, including those subject to disputes or delays due to queries, ensuring a comprehensive view of payment performance.</p>





Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
FS 06	Higher proportion of historic sundry debt to be collected compared to the same point the previous year

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the collection rate for the total outstanding historic debt (balance as at the previous year-end) will be compared to the same point the previous year		<p>As at 31 March 2025, the total outstanding historic debt stood at £19,407,241. By 30 September 2025, 59.56% of this debt had been successfully recovered, representing an improvement compared to 55.01% at the same point in the previous year.</p> <p>This positive trend is partly attributed to the continued support provided by the Council's external debt collection agency in those cases where normal in-house recovery action has not been successful. Additionally, Adult Social Care has recently appointed two extra staff members to support recovery efforts, which is expected to further enhance collection rates in the coming months.</p> <p>The Council has also seen a notable improvement in the recovery of debt raised during the current financial year (2025/26). At the end of Quarter 2, 79.82% of this debt had been collected, compared to 62.19% at the same stage last year.</p>


Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit




Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 01	Reduction in Sickness absence across the Council - Review and amend policy to focus on attendance, train and empower managers to apply procedure timely.



Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Reduce the sickness absence days FTE average across the Council by March 2026 Total 14.19 days for 2024/2025.	 	3.52 Q1 2025/26 - 3.57 Q2 2024/25 – 3.69
Reduce the average cost of absence across the council by March 2026	 	£1,480.55 Q1 2025/26 - £1,561.79 Q2 2024/25 - £1,246.94

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 02	Promote increased stability of the workforce across the organisation - Improve the Employer value proposition of HBC to Attract and retain talent and become an Employer of choice.





Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Improve turnover rate with a target of 13%		17.24%

Workforce Stability: 87.12%		<p>Q1 2025/26 Turnover 17.32%</p> <p>Q2 2024/25 Turnover 13.8%</p> <p>There is no cost associated with this as data does not take into account level and salary of leavers and starters.</p> <p>Calculated at Turnover: No leavers/No employees * 100</p>
Improve workforce stability rate with a minimum 88% target	 	<p>85.49%</p> <p>Q1 2025/26 Stability 85.73%</p> <p>Q2 2024/25 stability 89.24%</p>

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 03	Reduce flexible workforce (agency) spend and deployment across the organisation

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Reduce agency costs across organisation by March 2026	 	<p>Total Spend £3,319,643.57</p> <p>Connect2Halton £2,933,216.56</p> <p>Off contract £386,427.01</p> <p>Q1 2025/26 - £3,397,163.09</p> <p>Q2 2024/25 - £3,988,737.08</p>
Reduce agency usage by March 2026		672 agency placements


Corporate Priority	Priority 1-6 - Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 04	To increase the number of post filled 1st time To reduce the proportion of vacancies required advertisement

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
To reduce the proportion of vacancies required re-advertisement	 	9% Q1 2025/26 – 9% Q2 2024/25 - 6%
To increase the number of post filled 1st time	 	85% Q1 2025/26 – 84% Q2 2024/25 - 94%

ICT


Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
ICT 01	LD1 Average availability of the Council's M365 Systems 24/7 - 365.


Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
2023 – 2026 is seeing the delivery of the Azure and Microsoft M365 E5 platforms – through 2025 the teams continue to deliver updates with key technical partners, new integrated systems and further deployments of Cloud and on-premise deliveries as part of this major technology change programme.		<p>This programmes Phase 1 objective has been the full transformation from legacy telephony and contact centre systems to modern, integrated communication and data analysis infrastructure.</p> <p>The programme includes decommissioning outdated hardware, Cloud application deployment, implementing new cloud-based contact centre solution, building a secure on-premise and hybrid data Lakehouse.</p>

		<p>Whilst delivering a business intelligence platform that supports the Halton operational and strategic goals.</p> <p>These huge programmes of work will offer new and innovative platform technologies for the wider organisation to build upon this is not just a technical project set but a platform for the authority to innovate with process change and digital first strategies.</p> <p>The delivery of the new Telephony solution completed in October will enhance the development of the Salesforce delivery bringing with it Ai technologies and developments such as citizen portals and a greater level of integrated services at the front end through the authority's web site and social media presences.</p> <p>As noted within the previous quarter the centralisation of the authority's data assets is again a major project that will allow the delivery of accurate live reporting as well as form the base for Ai into the future.</p> <p>Ai is a complex beast and not something the authority can afford to buy off the shelf not only because of the cost in monetary terms but the cost of accuracy and the delivery needs of the authority many will be impatient to implement pockets of Ai but the HBC technical strategy is clear our objective is to containerise specific Ai deliveries and deliver the Knowledge based systems first then moving onto the more complex capabilities of generative Ai projects in test over Q3/Q4.</p>
--	--	---


Corporate Priority	
ICT 02	LD2 Security Incidents across each reporting quarter

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
<p>The software packages and monitoring solutions will be in place by the 2nd quarter 2025. This will include the delivery of DR and BCM opportunity through this new open-source platform. The Platform will be based upon a small proportion of paid for solutions with the balance based upon pure open-source technologies releasing further savings into the future.</p>		<p>As above we discussed the centralisation of data in order to deliver a standardised reporting platform allowing live data to be reported against in some cases improving the authority's accuracy and future planning efforts. Added to this we will be replacing the ageing HR and Pay platforms and linking them to a new cloud-based Finance system this will be the same finance solution we have successfully hosted in partnership with the Liverpool City Region, Mersey Travel and Sefton MBC.</p> <p>This platform will form the new ERP base supported by the data project over the next 12 months. This needs to be noted that this project is a considerably complex and time-consuming effort and will be reported against over the coming quarters and into the next financial year.</p> <p>This platform has now completed the technical development; phase 2 of the project has commenced defining the reporting requirements and dashboard requirement.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
ICT 03	LD3 Number of resolved customer contacts – Contact Centre

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the delivered process and the number of contacts will be reported with an objective of delivering contact through all digital means, reducing wait times and improving resolution at 1 st contact for those services that will allow. With the colossal amount of work being undertaken within this area through the delivery of the Sales-Force CRM, Ai and new Telephony that will now integrate with the new internal platforms and remove the old Skype telephony solution by October 2026.		30,211 individual call contacts across Quarter 2 The new Contact Centre Solution went live on the 15 th of October, the new cloud-based solution is now operating successfully linked to the authorities current CRM solution with plans over the next quarter to deploy and link this system to the new Salesforce CRM and supporting systems when this goes live later in the year.

Corporate Priority	Priority 4 - Tackling inequality and helping those who are most in need
ICT 04	LD4 Number of resolved contacts – One Stop Shop's



Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
The partnerships within the shop's continuing to increase at a pace and a programme of work linked to the Transformation programme owned by the department. This is currently under development to increase the levels of services available and looking to partner with key external agencies. Integration and an HBC staffing presence within the NHS Halton Health Hubs has been agreed with a 3 rd quarter 2026 target for the Runcorn opening.		30,144 individual face to face interactions across Quarter 1 The Customer Journey transformation strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to enhancing the full customer journey using personalised web portals, chatbots, mobile technologies, social media integration, and the latest AI and chat technologies.

	<p>The goal is to seamlessly link the authority's contact centre and shops with these technologies, improving both face-to-face and digital customer experiences while ensuring accessibility for all, including those with limited access to technology. This strategy will also integrate with existing CRM and Office 365 technologies to improve internal and external client interactions from contact to resolution. Digital poverty remains an issue within Halton as it does in many areas across the Northwest new ways of interacting with this client base will be part of the customer journey programme, but the shops remain an essential aspect of the front door into the council for many.</p> <p>This programme of work will also be linked to a newly agreed partnership with NHS led Halton Health Hubs – discussions continue to evaluate the options for a presence within the new Runcorn Old Town hub and also to offer an NHS presence within the HBC locations. The management within this area are discussing options to increase the number of council services within the locations bringing services into the community on a face-to-face basis. Digital poverty and low digital skills make sure not all interactions can be digital.</p>
--	--



<u>Legal & Democracy</u>

Key Objectives / milestones



Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 01	To ensure that decision makers are supported through the provision of timely and accurate advice and information and are kept informed of changing legislation and responsibilities

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Revised Constitution to be approved by Annual Council each May	 	Approved by Annual Council in May 2025



Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 02	To provide efficient and effective Democratic Support Services that provides Elected Members, as key decision makers, with the necessary information, support and training opportunities to fulfil their individual potential and management and governance role effectively

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Inductions to be completed by June following election and offer of MAPs to be monitored on a quarterly basis	 	<p>There were no local elections in May 2025, and no new Member Inductions have taken place this year.</p> <p>All Members have now been issued with a MAP.</p> <p>90% of Members have now attended at least one training course</p>

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 03	Ensure that prosecutions are carried out expeditiously by monitoring average time taken to issue from receipt of full instructions. The target is within 10 working days.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the target	 	All prosecutions have been issued within 10 working days from receipt of full instructions.







Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 04	Ensure that care cases are carried out expeditiously by monitoring average time taken to file application for Care proceedings at Court from receipt of all written evidence from client department. The target is within 3 working days

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the target: Children's – 24 cases issued	 	Decline in hearings issued and timeline targets have been met.



Catering Stadium & Registration Services




Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Four - Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need. Registrars
ERD 26	Provide accessible and efficient Registration Service to Halton residents.


Milestone:	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
95% of Births registered (or declarations) within 5 working days of request.	 	98% (National benchmark is 95%)
95% of Deaths registered (or declarations within 2 working days of request). <i>95% is national benchmark.</i>	 	95.6% (National benchmark is 95%) Customer attendance / choice impacted
90% of customers seen early, on time or within 10 minutes of their appointment time.	 	99.67% (National Benchmark is 90%) Figure due to late arrival of customers, not due to previous appointments over running.










Corporate Priority	Priority Two – Building a Strong Sustainable Local Economy. Widnes Market
ERD 36	Provide a variety of affordable trading spaces at Widnes Market

Milestone:	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Achieve a minimum of 80% indoor stall occupancy	 	82% occupancy rate. The market experiences good trader occupancy levels in an economy where many local markets are suffering from reduced trader numbers, with the national average of local market occupancy rates at 72% (in accordance with the 2023 survey from NABMA) 5% reduction on the same period in the previous year, this is attributed to the retirements of traders and the reduction in stall sizes without a loss of trader.

		In addition, not included in the figures the market has supported 31 community stalls across the period.
Achieve a minimum of 80% outdoor stall occupancy levels		78.75% a slight reduction of 2.5% on the same period 2024/25. Widnes outdoor market regular trading days are Monday, Friday and Saturday with the Flea and Collectors market on Wednesday. A combined flea and retail trading day was introduced on Thursdays in April 2022 and uptake on this day each week is low in comparison to established regular days which reduces the overall occupancy in terms of data analysis, however, operates at no additional cost to the Council.
Achieve minimum annual overall footfall of 585,000		363,686 visitor footfall is down by 9.7% on the same period last year, the national average footfall across the markets and retail sector has reduced in the same period by 7.45%
Strive for minimum 120% service budget recovery.		147.78% , an increase from 121.95% in the previous quarter.

Corporate Priority	Priority One – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Six - Valuing and Appreciating Halton and our Community The DCBL Stadium
ERD 37	Provide affordable space for business, community, cultural and recreational activities to take place.


	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Achieve minimum 55% meeting space occupancy.		72.08% a decrease in usage of meeting space from 75% in Q1 however an increase from the same period in the previous year at 42.3% .

Achieve minimum 55% meeting space occupancy.	 	42.97% a slight increase from 41.03% in Q1 however a decrease from 50.4% in the same period in the previous year. This decrease can be attributed to periods of closure of the conference suites over the period for essential building maintenance.
Achieve minimum 55% sports hall occupancy	 	66% a slight increase from 64% in Q1 and an increase from 57.69% in Q2 24/25.
Achieve minimum 75% 4G pitch occupancy levels	 N / A	Winter occupancy commences in Q3, although the pitch is available for use outside of peak-season, this is low level and doesn't inform comparable data.
95% Customer satisfaction 4/5 star reviews	 	100% of returns rated the stadium in terms of 'Quality of Venue' between 4 and 5 stars. 80% of returns rated the stadium in terms of 'Quality of Catering' between 4 and 5 stars. 100% of returns said they would likely or very likely use the stadium again. 100% of customers would likely or very likely recommend the stadium to others. (1 star being very poor and 5 stars being excellent) Overall, 100% of customers rated the stadium very good or excellent.
53% Service budget recovery annual target.	 	47% , a marginal reduction from Q1 47.06% Overall, the Stadium achieved 62.32% in 24/25 and 64.46% in 23/24. Christmas event and the start of the new season in Q4 should contribute to increased budget recovery in the remaining quarters.


Property Services

Key Objectives / milestones



Corporate Priority	Priority Two – Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy. Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future. Priority Six - Valuing and Appreciating Halton and our Community. Asset Management & Valuation
ERD 07	Provide Support for the Council's Corporate Priorities through the Provision of Property Advice

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
To achieve full cost recovery for the service whilst providing support to departments with their property requirements.		Asset Management have introduced a recharge policy for providing services to other departments. This is implemented by a case-by-case instruction form requiring the department to provide a cost code to be recharged.

Corporate Priority	Priority One – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future. Property Services
ERD 09	Rationalise the Council's main office accommodation to deliver revenue savings.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Exec Board approval to rationalise the Council's accommodation and progress with associated works including the review of the desk ratio policy.		Executive Board gave approval at the September meeting to develop options for the future use of the Council's office accommodation.

Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future. Property Services
ERD 10	Reduce Carbon Emissions from the Council's Property Portfolio

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Deliver the solar connection to the Leisure Centre by March 2026		The tender documentation for the project will be going out for pricing within the next few weeks. The procurement process inclusive of the tender evaluation will likely mean that the project won't be completed by 31 st March, however it is hoped the scheme will be on site by then.
Carry out decarbonisation measures on a minimum of 2 buildings to produce carbon emission reductions to contribute towards 1.5% by March 2026		<p>The decarbonisation works at Picow Farm Depot have been tendered and a preferred contractor has been appointed. A design meeting has been held with the contractor, and they are now tasked with refining the design to meet our specific needs. The current programme for Picow is that works will be complete by 31st March 2026.</p> <p>The decarbonisation works at Runcorn Town Hall and Kingsway Learning Centre are currently out to tender in conjunction with other buildings within the City Region. These projects will be delivered later in 2026/27.</p>

4.0 Financial Statements

Finance Department

Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2025

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	7,460	3,690	3,577	113	226
Insurances	1,048	694	576	118	234
Supplies & Services	1,129	380	433	(53)	(108)
Rent Allowances	31,500	13,021	13,021	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,902	783	751	32	65
LCR Levy	1,902	0	0	0	0
Bad Debt Provision	223	0	0	0	(65)
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	41	13	28	57
Discretionary Social Fund	106	50	1	49	99
Discretionary Housing Payments	279	107	109	(2)	(3)
Household Support Fund Expenditure	1,106	1,106	1,106	0	0
Total Expenditure	46,725	19,872	19,587	285	505
Income					
Fees & Charges	-351	-220	-237	17	33
Burdens Grant	-58	-51	-58	7	14
Dedicated schools Grant	-150	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Liability Order	-670	-530	-574	44	87
Recovery of Legal Costs	-10	-5	0	(5)	(10)
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	1
Schools SLAs	-319	-309	-308	(1)	(1)
LCR Reimbursement	-1,902	0	0	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-300	-122	-57	(65)	(129)
Rent Allowances	-30,700	-12,215	-11,959	(256)	(512)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-49	-34	(15)	(31)
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-279	-94	-93	(1)	(2)
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-453	-227	-227	0	0
Housing Benefits Award Accuracy	0	0	-22	22	22
Universal Credits	-5	-3	0	(3)	(5)
Household Support Fund Grant	-1,106	-2	-2	0	(1)
VEP Grant	0	0	0	0	3
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-89	-22	-22	0	0
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-187	-147	-277	130	260
Transfer from Reserves	-27	-13	-13	0	0
Total Income	-36,833	-14,009	-13,883	(126)	(271)
Net Operational Expenditure	9,892	5,863	5,704	159	234
Recharges					
Premises Support	493	247	247	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,092	1,046	1,046	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-6,814	-3,407	-3,407	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,229	-2,114	-2,114	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	5,663	3,749	3,590	159	234

Comments on the above figures

Net spend for the Finance Department is forecast to be £0.234m below budget at financial year-end. Reporting at the end of July 25 had projected net expenditure above budget of £0.331m.

The differential between periods is largely due to an increase of monthly rent allowances income. M4 net effect was a shortfall on income target of £1.205m, but the shortfall is now anticipated to be lower at £0.512m. The rental allowance income subsidy had been reducing year on year as Housing Benefit claimants are being transferred onto Universal Credit.

Employee costs are forecasted to underspend £0.226m largely due to unable to recruit to key vacancies, budgeting for posts which have been deleted and managing other vacant positions throughout the year.

Concessionary Travel spend is forecast to be £0.065m under budget at the end of the financial year-end, this is based on an estimate of passenger numbers provided by concessionary travel partners.

Discretionary Social Fund has not been utilised over the recent years due to the increased funding option of Household Support Fund being used, the department is forecasting an underspend of £0.099m.




Supplies and Services forecast overspend of £0.108m is due to audit fees and bank charges, based on previous years expenditure and the increasing costs coming through Stripe / Worldpay and Merchant Acquirer price increases for card fee rates, more customers choosing card payment as their preferred payment.

The business rates team are still engaging with Inform CPI Ltd (Analyse Local) who specialise in identifying new business rate premises that have not been included within the rating list. This will help increase income on the Collection Fund through additional business rate billing.

There has been a reduction of insurance premiums through negotiating better terms/changing providers. Public liability claimant damages have significantly reduced from previous years however motor liability claims have increased and along with movement in insurance provision results in an underspend position of £0.234m. This variance can will fluctuate due the unpredictable nature on public liability claims. July had been showing a £0.180m underspend.

Reimbursement & grant income has increased due to receiving unbudgeted income from Natwest purchase card rebates and administration income relating to Household Support Fund resulting in a favourable outturn position of £0.260m

Approved 2025/26 Savings**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		Increase in costs to be applied from 2026/27, dependent on Government not fixing maximum summons charges.
Debt Management		Debt Management – undertake a review of debt management policies and procedures, in order to implement a more robust approach to debt management and debt recovery, considering options such as seeking payment in advance wherever possible, to improve cashflow and reduce the risk of non-recovery.	0	100		Is currently being reviewed by the Transformation team.
Total Finance Department			90	100		

Chief Executive's Delivery Unit**Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2025**

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	3,569	1,757	1,737	20	41
Employees Training	99	59	43	16	33
Apprenticeship Levy	330	123	149	(26)	(52)
Supplies & Services	412	246	257	(11)	(23)
Agency	3	3	3	0	0
Total Expenditure	4,413	2,188	2,189	-1	-1
Income					
Fees & Charges	-241	-168	-179	11	20
Schools SLA Income	-580	-536	-495	(41)	(81)
Total Income	-821	-704	-674	(30)	(61)
Net Operational Expenditure	3,592	1,484	1,515	(31)	(62)
Recharges					
Premises Support	157	79	79	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,008	504	504	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-3,653	-1,826	-1,826	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,435	-1,243	-1,243	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,157	241	272	(31)	(62)

Comments on the above figures

The Chief Executive Delivery Unit Department (CXDU) is projecting an outturn position above the approved budget profile by £0.062m.

Forecasting an underspend against budget of £0.041m on salary costs due to unfilled vacant positions. However, July position was £0.091m, this has significantly reduced due to 2 apprenticeships becoming Policy Officers.

Apprenticeship Levy will maintain overspend as consistently incurring monthly costs of £0.031m against a £0.330m budget. Currently projecting a £0.052m against budget.

The School SLA Income has been reducing as some schools have become academies and are not buying back our services.

Capital Programme 2025/26

	2025/26 Original Allocation	2025/26 Revised Allocation	Cumulative 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	2026/27 Forecast Allocation
Transformation Programme	1,538.0	2,465.7	1,212.2	1,631.8	1,920.1	2,169.7	296.0	
Accelerated Growth	0.0	650.7	328.2	445.5	553.0	650.7	0.0	
Chief Executives Directorate Total	1,538.0	3,116.4	1,540.4	2,077.3	2,473.2	2,820.4	296.0	0.0

ICT Department**Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2025**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,899	2,894	2,803	91	183
Supplies & Services	1,063	682	608	74	147
Capital Finance	496	159	150	9	17
Computer Repairs & Software	1,724	1,962	1,974	(12)	(25)
Communication Costs	138	53	86	(33)	(66)
Premises	139	74	71	3	5
Transport	3	1	1	0	1
Other	4	1	4	(3)	(5)
Total Expenditure	9,466	5,826	5,697	129	257
Income					
Fees & Charges	-849	-239	-257	18	37
Schools SLA Income	-659	-512	-364	(148)	(295)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-3	3	3
Total Income	-1,508	-751	-624	(127)	(255)
Net Operational Expenditure	7,958	5,075	5,073	2	2
Recharges					
Premises Support	373	187	187	0	0
Transport	22	11	11	0	0
Central Support	1,391	696	696	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	2
HBC Support Costs Income	-10,969	-5,484	-5,484	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-7,689	-4,590	-4,590	0	2
Net Departmental Expenditure	269	485	483	2	4

Comments on the above figures

It is currently forecast net spend for the department will be £0.004m below the approved budget at the end of the financial year. This position has changed from the end of July 25 which was £0.119m below budget, largely due to the under recovery of School SLA income.

The main pressures faced by the ICT Department is now in relation to the IT infrastructure, with the move to Microsoft 365, staff have been able to utilise much more efficient hardware. However, the software utilised by the new hardware is at a premium and will be a continuous pressure and the Council will need to react to as prices fluctuate.

Budgets have been reallocated to align where expenditure has occurred.

Employees are forecasting to underspend by £0.183m due to the difficulty in recruiting skilled staff.

Supplies & Services was forecasted to overspend £0.202m in M4 but is now showing an underspend of £0.147m due to the Dell Technologies rental charges now allocated to Capital Financing.

There has been a substantial increase in communication costs resulting in a projected £0.066m overspend for BT & Vodafone quarterly bundle charges. This has reduced from £0.087m in M4.

Schools SLA income was forecasting to be £0.098 below budget in M4. The School SLA recharges have since been posted and the actual position is £0.295m below the budgeted income target. The reduction is due to more schools becoming academies and are declining in buying back departmental services.

Capital Programme 2025/26

	205/26 Original Allocation	2025/26 Revised Allocation	Cumulative 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	2026/27 Forecast Allocation
IT Rolling Programme	805.6	1,305.6	828.9	937.5	1,100.5	1,305.6	0.0	1,200.0
Total IT Rolling Programme	805.6	1,305.6	828.9	937.5	1,100.5	1,305.6	0.0	1,200.0

Legal and Democratic Services Department**Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2025**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	2,314	1,094	855	239	477
Agency Related Expenditure	63	63	165	(102)	(203)
Supplies & Services	181	112	95	17	35
Civic Catering & Functions	21	3	1	2	5
Legal Expenses	418	98	170	(72)	(146)
Transport Related Expenditure	8	3	3	0	0
Other Expenditure	1	1	1	0	(1)
Total Expenditure	3,006	1,374	1,290	84	167
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-75	-27	-10	(17)	(34)
School SLA's	-100	-88	-77	(11)	(23)
Licence Income	-370	-127	-112	(15)	(30)
Total Income	-545	-242	-199	(43)	(87)
Net Operational Expenditure	2,461	1,132	1,091	41	80
Recharges					
Premises Support	62	31	31	0	0
Transport Recharges	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support Recharges	275	138	138	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Support Recharge Income	-2,475	-1,237	-1,237	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,138	-1,068	-1,068	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	323	64	23	41	80

Comments on the above figures


As at the end of July 2025 the department was reporting a net overspend against budget of £0.019m. This has significantly reduced, the revised position is now £0.080m below budget.

Employee costs will now be less than the revised budget due to the difficulties in recruiting to the vacant positions and retaining current staff as well as savings in Democratic Services due to a non-election year saving on election payments.

As a result of the number of vacancies that exist within the department and outstanding workload, agency staff are required to maintain the service. The main area of concern for the department is the volume of agency costs resulting from hard to fill vacant posts. These costs are currently expected to total £0.203m at the end of the financial year however this could increase to meet caseload demands.

Legal expenses are forecast to be over the approved budget by £0.146m, largely as a result of the limited number of staff available to clear an increasing caseload. As recruitment is undertaken these costs are expected to slowly reduce. The impact of transformation and recovery work in Children Services, as well as alternatives to agency staff such as attractive market supplements should help drive down the overspend in the department.

Approved 2025/26 Savings**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		Achieved.
Total Legal and Democratic Services			0	6		

COMMUNITY & GREENSPACE**Revenue Budget as at 30th September 2025**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	15,451	7,788	7,486	302	603
Agency - Covering vacancies	20	12	12	0	0
Agency - In addition to establishment	16	16	199	(183)	(274)
Premises	3,304	1,562	1,609	(47)	(93)
Supplies & Services	3,659	1,514	1,639	(125)	(249)
Transport	117	66	83	(17)	(33)
Extended Producer Responsibility	500	0	0	0	0
Other Agency Costs	454	209	228	(19)	(39)
Other Expenditure	187	13	13	0	0
Waste Disposal Contracts	7,121	1,125	1,133	(8)	(16)
Transfers to Reserves	1,091	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	31,920	12,305	12,402	(97)	(101)
Income					
Sales Income	-1,359	-687	-691	4	8
Fees & Charges Income	-6,300	-3,622	-3,709	87	174
Rental Income	-1,118	-465	-428	(37)	(73)
Government Grant Income	-5,210	-1,319	-1,319	0	0
Reimbursement & Other Grant Income	-871	-371	-371	0	0
SLA Income	-23	0	0	0	0
Internal Fees Income	-216	-39	-129	90	179
Capital Salaries	-236	-15	0	(15)	(31)
Transfers From Reserves	-619	-4	-4	0	0
Total Income	-15,952	-6,522	-6,651	129	257
Net Operational Expenditure	15,968	5,783	5,751	32	156
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,657	829	829	0	0
Transport Support	2,433	1,270	1,312	(42)	(84)
Central Support	4,297	2,148	2,148	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-843	-422	-422	0	0
Net Total Recharges	7,743	3,825	3,867	(42)	(84)
Net Departmental Expenditure	23,711	9,608	9,618	(10)	72

Comments on the above figures

Net spend against the Community and Greenspaces department has seen an improvement to the net outturn position since the previous report at 31st July 2025. The forecasted outturn is now expected to fall £0.72m under the approved budget profile (in comparison to £0.123m overspend previously forecasted).

Employee spend continues to be an area providing underspend for the department into the new financial year, forecast spend being £0.603m under the approved budget profile. There continue to be vacancies held for restructures taking place contributing to the underspend. However, as a result of this, in order to facilitate the very visible services provided to the residents of Halton, both Agency and Supplies & Services expenditure is forecasted to be (£0.274m and £0.249 respectively) above the approved 2025/26 budget.

Estimated spend on premises costs is forecast to be £0.093m over budget in 2025/26. The Stadium utility costs are notably higher than the available budget and will continue to be a budget pressure this year. There is more focus on internal services that can be provided (See £0.179m forecast

overachieved Internal Fees Income), and should this continue it can be utilised to offset the premises costs in subsequent financial years.


Supplies and Services is forecasting an overspend of £0.249m which is a budget pressure throughout the Department, and is primarily caused by inflationary cost increases of key goods and services over recent years. There is a risk if the Council were to contain these costs within the budget profile there would be a reduction in the service provided.



Historically, Waste Disposal Contracts had contributed to an underspend for the department, however, due to the rise in costs last year, expenditure is now likely to fall close to the approved budget profile. It is worth noting, as the size of the contracts are very large, small percentage changes to the invoices can have significant impacts on the outturn position of the department, and with invoices being received several periods after the costs are incurred, the outturn position may change throughout the year. Within 2025/26 there has been a budget line created for the Extender Producer Responsibility Scheme, this funding has been provided to manage packaging waste. In order to facilitate the scheme and ensure compliance, £0.500m has been forecasted to be utilised within the financial year, should there be any budget underutilised by 31st March 2026 this will require carrying forward into the 2026/27 financial year.

Income for the Community and Greenspaces Department is on track to be higher than the approved budget by £0.257m. The aforementioned internal fee focus by the Stadium is contributing to this as well as increasing usage of internal room hire across the buildings within the Department. The benefit of this income staying within the council rather than going to external suppliers is offset by some other income targets being unachievable. The main contributor to the overachievement however is with Halton Leisure Centre, income is remaining consistently high and forecasts have been adjusted as such to reflect this. In comparison to last financial year, the outturn income figure is expected to rise by approximately 99%.

There also continues to be pressures with the Brindley as the extension works are underway, income did fall within the previous financial year, and is currently forecast to do the same this year. Once the works are completed the income is likely to rise again, however, this will require close monitoring as the utility expenditure will also increase with the larger site.

APPROVED BUDGET SAVINGS COMMUNITY AND GREENSPACES DEPARTMENT

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Stadium & Catering Services	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over	12	0		School meals service has ceased and is reflected in the 25/26 budget.

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		
– School Meals		£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.				
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		Green waste charges have been increased to £50.
Area Forums		Area Forums – cease the funding for Area Forums.	0	170		Area forum budgets have been removed in 25-26
Total Community & Greenspace Dept			12	270		

Capital

Scheme Detail	205/26 Original Allocation	2025/26 Revised Allocation	Cumulative Actual 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	2026/27 Forecast Allocation
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Stadium Minor Works	22.1	22.1	24.6	24.6	24.6	24.6	-2.5	30.0
Halton Leisure Centre	99.7	99.7	89.3	86.8	88.8	90.8	8.9	0.0
Children's Playground Equipment	67.8	67.8	50.5	60.5	60.5	65.0	2.8	65.0
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	13.0	0.0	0.0
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12.0	12.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.0	0.0	0.0
Open Spaces Schemes	600.0	770.0	564.5	600.0	650.0	770.0	0.0	600.0
Runcorn Town Park	450.6	450.6	0.0	0.0	60.0	125.0	325.6	280.0
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,841.6	250.0	152.5	170.0	180.0	250.0	0.0	1,591.6
Pickerings Pasture Cafe	469.2	450.0	110.3	175.0	300.0	450.0	0.0	19.2
Cemetery Infrastructure work	469.1	469.1	0.0	89.0	207.0	410.0	59.1	683.0
Stadium Public Address System	810.0	346.0	34.9	176.0	286.0	346.0	0.0	379.0
Litter Bins	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	20.0
Replacement Cremator	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
Stadium Steelwork Repairs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	600.0
Brindley Lighting	0.0	200.0	0.0	100.0	150.0	200.0	0.0	0.0
Grangeway Court Refurbishment	0.0	52.0	8.0	10.0	16.0	52.0	0.0	948.0
CCTV Infrastructure Works	0.0	105.0	1.2	5.0	50.0	105.0	0.0	395.0
Total Community & Greenspaces	5,215.2	3,327.3	1,035.8	1,496.9	2,072.9	2,933.4	393.9	5,630.8

There were some delays to capital projects starting within the last financial year due to staffing issues. These are likely to be completed within the 2025/26 capital scheme. In regards to the cemetery infrastructure work there is potential to receive grant/external funding rather than rely solely on borrowing. The *replacement cremator* line is in relation to a cremator installed last year, however the contractors are requiring some additional works required to get it fully commissioned and proper emissions testing to be carried out. Management are currently reviewing options, where possible this will be funded from underspend from other schemes.

Revenue Operational Budget at 30 Sept 25

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	3,864	2,456	2,331	125	251
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	172	(172)	(259)
Repairs & Mainenance	1,687	877	877	0	0
Premises	174	136	137	(1)	(1)
Energy & Water Costs	1,043	393	346	47	93
NNDR	647	647	635	12	12
Rents	157	80	79	1	1
Economic Regeneration Activities	43	8	8	0	0
Security	508	82	84	(2)	(4)
Supplies & Services	516	261	261	0	0
Supplies & Services - Grant	772	272	272	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	72	29	29	0	0
Total Expenditure	9,483	5,241	5,231	10	93
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-407	-203	-239	36	72
Rent - Commercial Properties	-906	-352	-351	(1)	(1)
Rent - Investment Properties	-38	-19	-18	(1)	(1)
Government Grant	-854	-705	-705	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-149	-149	-149	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-55	-48	-48	0	0
Recharges to Capital	-260	-47	-47	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-574	-522	-522	0	0
Total Income	-3,243	-2,045	-2,079	34	70
Net Operational Expenditure	6,240	3,196	3,152	44	163
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,738	1,369	1,369	0	0
Transport	26	13	13	0	0
Central Support	2,878	1,439	1,439	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-9,342	-4,671	-4,671	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,696	-1,850	-1,850	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,544	1,346	1,302	44	163

Comments on the above figures

Finance maintains regular communication with the department to monitor and analyse expenditure, helping to identify potential savings that can support both current and future priorities. In today's climate of tight budgets, achieving these efficiencies is more important than ever.

The latest report indicates that the department is projected to be under budget by £0.163 million at year-end. This improved forecast is largely due to increased income from fees and charges, following the reconciliation of service charge invoices, as well as a review of repairs and maintenance spending throughout the year.

Supporting Information

Maximising grant funding remains a key priority, supported by diligent account monitoring and careful planning. Specific projects have been identified, with staff time allocated to ensure delivery aligns with funding objectives. Compliance with grant conditions is maintained at every stage, and this focused approach will continue throughout the year.

Maintaining a fully staffed team is essential to fulfilling statutory and contractual obligations and driving forward the borough's regeneration agenda. Despite the introduction of a market supplement, recruitment for key roles, particularly surveyors, recruitment continues to be challenging due to a limited pool of qualified candidates. On a positive note, the successful appointment of Project Managers marks a significant step forward and is expected to reduce reliance on agency staff, helping to manage costs more effectively. Agency staffing costs are currently projected at £0.259 million for this financial year. These roles are critical to the delivery of regeneration activity. Without them, there is a risk of project delays, which could impact future revenue from business rates and council tax. Where possible, staffing costs are recovered through capital budgets and external funding streams.

The financial impact of vacant properties across the borough continues to present a significant budgetary challenge. In addition to the loss of rental income while these properties remain unoccupied, further costs are incurred for utilities, repairs, and ongoing maintenance. As of the end of July, total costs stood at £0.136 million, rising to £0.154 million over the past two months. To help reduce these expenses, it is essential to accelerate leasing activity or explore interim uses, such as short-term rentals or community-based initiatives, that could generate income and offset costs. However, several properties are currently in poor condition and will require refurbishment before they can be considered for letting.

Despite a notable rise in energy costs over recent years, the department is currently forecasting a year-end underspend of £0.093 million. However, this projection may be reduced if energy usage increases, particularly as more staff return to the office or if demand rises due to seasonal temperature fluctuations.

The Repairs and Maintenance programme is subject to ongoing review to ensure expenditure remains within the allocated budget. It is projected that costs will be contained within budget for the remainder of the financial year. Regular monitoring will continue to ensure early identification of any emerging pressures, allowing for timely intervention and mitigation where possible.

Approved 2025/26 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in March 25.

Capital Budget at 30 Sept 25

	205/26 Original Allocation	2025/26 Revised Allocation	Cumulative Actual 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	2026/27 Forecast Allocation
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Equality Act Improvement Works	303.5	303.5	0.0	150.0	236.0	303.5	0.0	300.0
Foundary Lane Residential Area	3,520.9	3,520.9	878.0	1,020.9	1,200.0	3,520.9	0.0	0.0
Property Improvements	231.1	231.1	111.2	133.2	153.6	231.1	0.0	200.0
Town Deal	21,823.1	18,949.5	4,986.3	8,663.1	11,300.7	13,210.2	5,739.3	2,873.6
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	101.2	101.2	0.0	20.0	55.0	102.2	-1.0	0.0
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	82.0	82.0	4.2	33.3	56.4	82.0	0.0	0.0
Changing Places	17.0	17.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.0	0.0	0.0
Kingsway Centre Demolition	708.0	708.0	293.0	438.0	488.0	538.0	170.0	0.0
Sci-tech Daresbury Project Violet	2,200.0	2,200.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2,200.0	0.0	0.0
Astmoor Masterplan	81.6	81.6	0.0	0.0	30.0	81.6	0.0	0.0
Sci-tech Daresbury - CPO	3,000.0	3,000.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3,000.0	0.0	0.0
Warm Homes Plan	0.0	587.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	587.6	0.0	0.0
Total Economy, Enterprise & Property	32,068.4	29,782.4	6,272.7	10,458.5	13,519.7	23,874.1	5,908.3	3,373.6

Comments on above figures

Foundry Lane

The development at Foundry Lane continues to progress at pace, with several key milestones achieved over the past two months. On-site operations remain well-coordinated and steady, keeping firmly on track to deliver this exciting new housing scheme.

All remaining homes scheduled for completion by 26 November.

To maintain momentum, outline planning permission has now been submitted for Phase 2, ensuring the next stage of development can move forward without delay.

Sci-Tech Daresbury Project Violet

The LCR CA have approved the full business case for the lab building and the grant funding agreement is currently being drafted. The second building which was initially expected to be office space is currently being reviewed as a potential second lab construction, with an outline business case being prepared for the CA. The current programme anticipates tendering the project and contract award in late 2025 and construction commencing in July 2026.

Property Improvements

Various works undertaken as and when required, works ongoing, the budget will be spent at year end

Changing Places

Works complete, all retention monies to be paid.

Town Deal

All Town Deal funded projects are progressing at different stages of work.

The Brindley extension started on site August 2024. Estimated date for completion is April 2026. RIBA stage 4 of the Brindley Green has started following submission of the planning application.

The youth centre -part of the Creative and Digital Skill centre - started September 2024, with the new build now well advanced with interior work now taking place. The roof of the wintergarden is now in place. Completion is expected March 2026.

The Health Hub started work on site April 2025, after the library vacated to temporary location. The construction work is expected to be completed November 2025 followed by commissioning by the NHS.

The Runcorn Street art was delivered in May 2025. A celebration event was held 26 July. This project is completed

The construction of the Temple Hall started March 2025, with foundation complete. All steelwork is up, and block walls erected, with outer skin of brick work progressing well. Practical completion is expected by the end of 2025.

The construction of two canal trip boats has been ordered at a boatyard in Liverpool, with one boat having been launched in Runcorn on the canal 26 July.

The over 55s apartment block Mercia House is under construction at High Street has now all doors and windows in, and external brickwork is well advanced. Legacie are preparing for the external landscaping.

HBC has entered into a pre-construction service agreement with F Parkinsons through a design and build route for the Enterprise Facility.

Design work progresses on the remaining projects.

Kingsway Leisure Centre Demolition

The demolition works are now complete.

UKSPF

New reduced allocation for 25/26 which is for town centre improvements.

Sci-tech Daresbury Project – CPO

The JV continues to develop the required documentation to make the CPO in order to secure land for the delivery of the Sci-Tech Daresbury masterplan. It is anticipated that the CPO process will run during 2026 with funds only required at the conclusion of that project or shortly after. The majority of spend is potentially in 26-27 at the earliest.

ECONOMY, ENTERPRISE AND PROPERTY DEPARTMENT




APPENDIX A

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 not expected this saving will materialise in the current year.





5.0 Application of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress Symbols

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

Direction of Travel Indicator

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