

# Corporate Policy and Performance Board– Priority Based Monitoring Report

Reporting Period: **Quarter 2 –1<sup>st</sup> July – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

## 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 2021 / 22 for service areas within the remit of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board.
- 1.2 It covers key priorities for development or improvement in the various functional areas reporting to the Board in relation to the Council's priority of Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency i.e.:
- Financial Services
  - Human Resources, Organisational Development, Policy, Performance and Efficiency
  - ICT Infrastructure
  - Legal and Democracy
  - Catering, Stadium and Registration Services
  - Property Services
- 1.3 The emergence of the global COVID19 pandemic early in 2020 has had a significant and unavoidable impact upon Council services the full extent of which is yet to become known. The Council, along with key partner agencies, has prioritised its resources upon mitigating the serious risks to public health, the protection of vulnerable residents, and the social cohesion of the local community. In developing appropriate responses to emerging national and local priorities this situation is likely to remain the case for the foreseeable future.
- 1.4 The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress to date is explained within Section 8 of this report.

## 2.0 Key Developments

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

### Financial Services

### 2.2 Benefits Division

#### Covid19 Self-isolation Support Payments

In mid-September 2021 the Government announced that the Self-isolation Support Payment scheme would be extended to end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The table below shows the number of awards paid at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

## Self-isolation Payment awards at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021

SIP Awards	Mandatory	Discretionary
Fund available	£407,000	£275,000
No. of awards	729	329
Current spend	£364,500	£164,500

### Universal Credit Implementation

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) statistics indicate at 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021 there were 15,968 people within Halton claiming Universal Credit. By way of providing context, in March 2020 there were 10,918 Halton residents claiming Universal Credit, and this illustrates the impact of Covid19.

### Processing Times

At 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 processing times for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction were as follows: new claims 16.80 days and changes in circumstances 12.97 days.

## **2.3 Audit, Procurement & Operational Finance Division**

### Insurance

2021 has already proven to be very difficult year in the insurance market with challenging conditions continuing due to insurer capacity reducing and increasing rates. The changes in the market and upward pressure on premiums had started well before the onset of the global coronavirus pandemic, which has further exacerbated the situation. It is recognised that we are now in the hardest general insurance market for more than 20 years, not just for the public sector but across all sectors.

In terms of the Council's insurance arrangements, we are currently approaching the end of the third year of the casualty insurance contract which has an option to extend for up to two additional years. The Council is currently awaiting confirmation from the insurer on their intentions in relation to the two year extension of the long term agreement. Experience from other insured bodies has shown that some insurers are seeking additional premium or requiring the insured to accept a higher level of self-insurance.

### Procurement – Green Paper

Following the UK's withdrawal from the European Union the future of how publically funded bodies are to procure the goods and services they need is under Government consultation. The requirement to publish tenders in the Official Journal of the European Journal (OJEU) via Tenders Electronic Daily (TED) has been replaced by a UK system called Find a Tender (FTS).

The Government is currently reviewing the feedback provided during the consultation on the Green Paper, which will then hopefully allow them to draft legislation to assist in their stated aim of speeding up and simplifying procurement processes.

### Invoice Processing Performance

The Council has paid 93.4% of its invoices within 30 days during 2021/22 to date. The calculation includes invoices where payment is delayed due to the invoice being in dispute. The comparator figure for 2020/21 was 92.6%.

## **2.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division**

### 2021/22 Quarter 1 Spending

For the financial year to 30 June 2021, overall Council operational net spending (excluding Covid) was £25.8m against a budget of £25.6m, resulting in an overspend position to date against budget of £0.2m. The forecast position for the year to 31 March 2022 was a prudently estimated overspend of £4.7m.

Covid costs and loss of income for the first quarter of the year totals £3.9m, with forecast costs through to the end of the year of £12.5m. It is expected these costs will be funded in full from Government grant.

Capital spending at 30 June 2021 totalled £2.990m, which is 97% of the planned spending of £3.071m at this stage. This represents 8% of the total Capital Programme of £35.118m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years).

The updated medium term financial forecast and half year Council wide spending will both be reported to Executive Board on 18 November 2021.

#### Council Tax and Business Rate Collection

Council tax collection for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the year is 54.58%, up 0.69% on this point last year and down by 0.47% from that reported in 2019/20. Cash collection for the year to date is £39.483m, which includes £1.116m collected in relation to previous year debts.

Business rates collection for the year to 30 September 2021 is 54.76%, up 1.16% on this point last year but down by 2.64% from that reported for the same period in 2019/20. Cash collected for the year to date is £29.668m.

#### Breathing Space

From 04 May 2021 the Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space) gave someone in problem debt the right to legal protections from their creditors. There are two types of breathing space: a standard breathing space and a mental health crisis breathing space. As at 30 September 2021 the Council has in place 97 Breathing Space applications for debts totalling £0.179m. The breakdown of which is as follows:

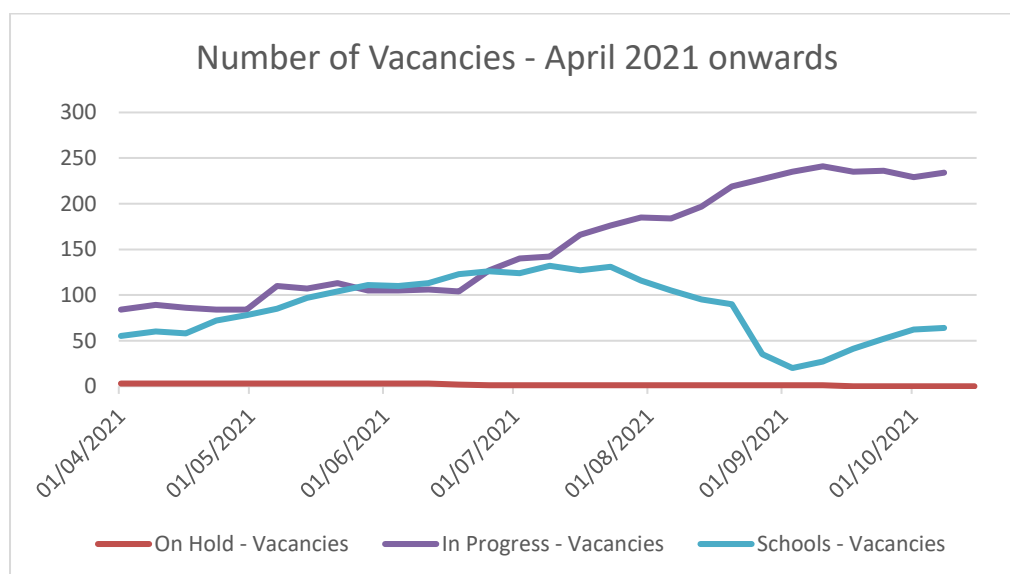
Council Tax – 56 applications, value of debt £0.119m

Sundry Debts – 4 applications, value of debt £0.008m

Mersey Gateway – 37 applications, value of debt £0.052m

#### **Human Resources, Organisational Development, Policy, Performance and Efficiency**

**2.5** The Efficiency, Resourcing & Recruitment Service has come under significant pressure as a result of unprecedented demand for recruitment across the council, and schools. The graphic below shows the pattern of demand over the year to date and as can be seen, recruitment to Council services it is at unprecedented levels. School recruitment hit a higher than average peak over the summer and then fell away, although current vacancy numbers are higher than would normally be expected at this time of year.



Given the resources available, there is no scope to intensify activity to meet demand, instead some services will experience slower recruitment until such time as demand subsides.

Consultation with neighbouring authority's reveals a similar picture, with all LCR Council's enduring low applicant numbers for many posts, and the completion of recruitment procedures resulting in no appointment. It is clear that the dynamics of the sub-regional labour market have altered during 2021, although research has not yet firmly concluded why that is. Over the coming month's analysis will continue, however it is clear that some services cannot be optimally resourced because the labour market will not supply sufficient people.

A new Organisational Development & Performance Management Service went live on 1<sup>st</sup> July. The merging of these two business disciplines into one coherent service model now connects business planning, performance monitoring, and Organisational Development under a single management line. They use performance information (both employee and service based) to inform the development of OD interventions and programmes will now begin to take place, to enhance delivery against the key objectives set out in business plans and ultimately contribute to the delivery of the Council's priorities.

The policy framework developed in 2020 to enable the Council to safely return physical premises and work spaces to operation following the 'lockdown' between March and July 2020 and Nov – Dec 2020 has now been revised and updated. The Policy function within the Department has played a pivotal role in coordinating a temporary policy position which permits safe return to office spaces of staff who have been homeworking, but wish to reconnect with the office environment, from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021. A report on the take up of this will be made in the Q3 monitoring report.

As of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021, team meetings and one-to-one sessions have been reintroduced to staff groups who remain working remotely. The aim is to re-build team and manager-employee relationships effectively following the disruption created by the pandemic. Guidelines to staff are clear and risk is minimised. This approach has been taken up in many areas and is proving successful.

During the quarter, preparations were made for a return to face-to-face delivery of learning and development activity. This is set against a COVID-safe protocol and has resumed safely and successfully.

Linked to the above, it was previously reported that the Council had considered its options around how employee capability, working practices, premises and technology can be combined to ensure an effective organisation for the future, and the basis of a structured 'Future Work' change programme had been developed. The work associated with this programme will commence in spring 2022.

The Council published its Public Sector Apprenticeship Report 2021 (April 2020 – March 2021). All public sector bodies that employ 250 staff or more are required to complete an annual report on their progress towards meeting their public sector apprenticeships target. Link:

<https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/opacity/transparent.aspx>

The service is currently exploring the appointment of another new hire HR Division apprentice and also developing a career qualification framework (linked to CIPFA approved qualifications) within the Finance Division to initially appoint 2 apprentices.

## **ICT and Administration**

### **2.6 Return to the Office:**

As the Authority begins the process of staff returning to the office ICT Services have enabled all 'green' desks with the required equipment (minus laptop) that staff would have had pre-lockdown/Home Working Plan. We are aware that staff needed to take equipment home at the start of the lockdown.

When more than 50% occupancy is allowed staff may need to bring equipment back into the office to work on 'red' desks – ICT Services will not be able to provide additional equipment for any of the 'red' desks moving forwards – this has to be done from equipment that staff have taken home. If any members of staff needs assistance with assembling equipment on a 'red' desk then please contact the ICT Helpdesk in the first instance. If any colleague feels that it is appropriate for an individual to have a complete set-up in work as well as at home then of course we can facilitate this once an appropriate Cost Code has been provided.

**Sickness levels**, remained over this quarter at a reasonable level with only a small number of staff testing positive with COVID symptoms. One Stop Shop staffing issues noted and discussed within the next section.

The ICT teams covered all emergency calls over this continued period of home working effectively, with all calls resolved quickly without any disruption to key services. Software Systems and Hardware maintenance plans remain in place linked to out of hours and weekend working to compliment extended front-line working hours.

The Halton Cloud continues to support all 2600 desktop users with an average of 1800 concurrent users connected into services at any one time from home, system uptime over this quarter has been excellent, whilst accommodating a considerable number of changes and adaptations to the requirements profile of our user base over this extended period of the pandemic.

The recent issue with access into the corporate email system was resolved as the sixteen associated data bases linked to the service corrupted during an essential weekend upgrade this in turn slowed email services down, no email or total loss of service was experienced. This issue caused a disruption of service on the Monday morning leading to minimal disruption as the system was reconfigured. The infrastructure teams dealt with the issue as quickly as the technology stack allowed resolving the problem. Given the extent of the issue this caused delays over a two day period. Further measures are in place to limit any further disruption but as with any complex system out of the ordinary one off issues can occur that cannot be planned for given the complexity of the systems in place.

Considerable efforts continue to be made to enhance online meeting capability, with new and innovative solutions under development to enhance hybrid working within Teams and Skype as the authority starts to return to the office environment as well as promotes home working where possible over the next few months.

**2.7 The Records Management Facility** is fully operational and supporting the authority and its clients with new services being developed supporting the authority through centralising data and improving secure access to physical as well as digital data sets.

- Incoming mail scanning (corporate)
- Hybrid mail (corporate)
- RMU Office now open at Picow Farm Road
- Sefton invoicing contract services delivered throughout the lockdown
- Cemeteries support
- Open Spaces Service support
- Courier service

Warehouse: RMU staff, observing social distancing, are continuing to work on warehouse tasks as required.

**Data retention in SharePoint (SP):** creating a process to prepare SP data for migration to the new SP environment is underway. This will align with the corporate wide Records Retention Policy.

**2.8 Schools ICT Programme:** Halton Borough Council (HBC) ICT Services following the restructure has adapted and changed its services to schools and academies in order to meet the changing requirements of schools. The service offers a comprehensive package of support ranging from basic admin machine connection to the council network to scheduled technician visits, and have added services and key personnel supporting the technical requirements to improve the overall support package from HBC. This service will now continue with the extended offer of GDPR support SLA's for all schools.

### One Stop Shops

Service Area	HDL HaltonLea	HDL Widnes	Grand Total	Percentage
Council Tax	1564	1798	3362	23.82%
Adult Social Care	1024	1884	2908	20.60%
Finance and Support Services	586	848	1434	10.16%
Waste Management	431	607	1038	7.35%
Corporate Processes	340	375	715	5.07%
Benefits	389	312	701	4.97%
Environmental	293	358	651	4.61%
Highways	213	254	467	3.31%
Open Spaces	222	232	454	3.22%
Unknown	251	178	429	3.04%
Housing Solutions	121	144	265	1.88%
Education	138	96	234	1.66%
Transportation	144	79	223	1.58%
Property Services	60	107	167	1.18%
Human Resources	75	78	153	1.08%
HDL - internal procedures	86	66	152	1.08%
Planning and Building Control	52	83	135	0.96%
Community And Leisure	68	57	125	0.89%
Registrar	34	68	102	0.72%
Revenues	47	52	99	0.70%
Childrens Social Care	42	46	88	0.62%
Halton Housing Trust	30	28	58	0.41%
Legal and Licensing	18	26	44	0.31%
Economy	14	27	41	0.29%
External Agencies	23	11	34	0.24%
Tourist Information	14	3	17	0.12%
HBC - OOH Procedures	1	7	8	0.06%
Families Information Service	2	5	7	0.05%
EDT	1	1	2	0.01%
OLD SHPS - no longer used	1		1	0.01%
Youth Services	1		1	0.01%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6285</b>	<b>7830</b>	<b>14115</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

## Contact Centre

Service Area	Contact Centre	Percentage
Adult Social Care	5614	20.98%
Waste Management	5466	20.42%
Council Tax	4494	16.79%
EDT	2439	9.11%
Childrens Social Care	1772	6.62%
Corporate Processes	1227	4.58%
Registrar	1007	3.76%
Environmental	744	2.78%
Highways	670	2.50%
Benefits	555	2.07%
Open Spaces	397	1.48%
Housing Solutions	340	1.27%
Unknown	308	1.15%
HBC - OOH Procedures	274	1.02%
Education	200	0.75%
Property Services	185	0.69%
Planning and Building Control	181	0.68%
Halton Housing Trust	180	0.67%
Finance and Support Services	170	0.64%
Transportation	125	0.47%
Community And Leisure	112	0.42%
Revenues	110	0.41%
Legal and Licensing	57	0.21%
HDL - internal procedures	45	0.17%
External Agencies	29	0.11%
Families Information Service	24	0.09%
ICT Services	15	0.06%
Economy	14	0.05%
Human Resources	4	0.01%
Risk and Emergency Planning	3	0.01%
HHT OOH	2	0.01%
OLD SHPS - no longer used	1	0.00%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>26764</b>	<b>1</b>

## **Legal and Democracy**

**2.9** Council in July accepted a recommendation to make some changes to the committee structures, which have now been put in place.

At the same meeting, Council approved a revised Code of Conduct for Members. A training session on the new Code was put on for all Members in September with a very high attendance. Recruitment exercises have been successfully carried out for key posts in the Department.

## **Catering, Stadium and Registration Services**

**2.10** The Registration Service continues to manage and deliver its statutory duties in response to the restrictions and easements as legislated in the Coronavirus Act 2020. On the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021, the restrictions on the numbers of persons eligible to attend such ceremonies were lifted. Therefore the predominant focus of the Service has been to ensure that previously cancelled and postponed marriage and Civil Partnerships ceremonies have been able to take place where requested. The Service has also recruited four casual civil ceremony celebrants to ensure that we have appropriate capacity and resilience to deliver on the expected ceremony programme for 2022/2023. There are also a significant number of statutory Notices of Marriage and Civil Partnerships that will need to be retaken and these are being dealt with in priority order.

## **Stadium**

**2.11** The stadium continued to host weddings under COVID guidelines and more recently opened up for reduced numbers for meetings and conferences. Enquiries we have received for meetings & conferences are vastly down on previous years however this was to be expected.

A Christmas Function calendar has been put together with 4 dates in December proving to be popular with initial bookings reaching 50% of capacity.

Decarbonisation work has started at the stadium with the planned works anticipated to take over 12 weeks. This should greatly reduce the stadium's carbon footprint.

The i-Pitch has reopened for community usage with some of the restrictions still in place allowing for smoother change overs between bookings and reduced capacity for parents.

## **School Meals**

**2.12** The service is currently experiencing a high turnover of staffing, we continue to use casuals and agency as and when required but finding this high turnover along with COVID absences and general sickness is putting pressure on certain catering outlets.

## **Property Services**

### **2.13 Property Services Operations**

#### Millbrow Care Home- Proposed refurbishment

The proposed refurbishment works at Millbrow, at an estimated cost of £1.5m, have been on hold since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Adults Services are now looking again at their model of delivery and further feasibility works are being undertaken in respect of the service requirements going forward.

#### Proposed New Leisure Centre Moor Lane

The works cannot progress until vacant possession of the site has been obtained. The CPO process is ongoing, all objections have now been removed and we are waiting for the planning inspectorate to confirm the CPO.



The anticipated start on site date is July 2022, this could be sooner however if the CPO is confirmed within the next couple of months. The tenants have found alternative locations and are both planning to have vacated site by March 2022.

#### Education maintenance programme

The 2021/22 Education maintenance programme was approved by Council In March. The programme consists of 18 separate projects at a total cost of circa £1.36m. 10 of the projects were completed across the summer period, the remaining projects will be carried out throughout the remainder of the year and all should be completed by year end.

#### Corporate Maintenance programme

The 2021/22 corporate maintenance programme was approved by the AMWG in January. The programme consists of numerous projects which will be undertaken across the full year. Some smaller projects have been completed, other projects are at varying stages, all the budget should be fully expended by year end.

#### Mersey Gateway Handback Sites

A settlement deed is now in place, in respect of the remaining outstanding works on the handback sites, this has yet to be signed by all parties however due to some outstanding issues with UU which are yet to be resolved. We have confirmed with Mersey link that once signed all sites will have been deemed to be handed back. Mersey link are on site with the making good works to C&T Garage adjacent to site B, Viking House has now been demolished, the cladding works are yet to complete however. UU have some works to complete on Site A&C other than that any other necessary outstanding work will be completed by HBC using the funds set aside by the agreement.

#### Crow Wood Lane Supported living development

Design development work has been completed however the project has been put on hold whilst Adult Services consider other options.

#### 71 High Street Runcorn- Refurbishment

Planning approval is in place for the above. The works are currently out to tender, the budget has been confirmed as such once a contractor has been appointed the works will be able to commence on site. The anticipated start date is January 10<sup>th</sup> 2022 with completion by early July 2022.

#### Decarbonisation scheme- Halton Stadium

£1.3m has been secured from the Government's decarbonisation fund for works at Halton Stadium, a further sum has also been approved, the total cost of the work being circa £1.67m. Works have commenced on site and are progressing well however there will be a delay with the installation of the air source heat pumps due to the delivery being put back by the manufacturer due to the excessive demand for the units. All other works are progressing on programme.

#### Brookvale Rec- Proposed Artificial Pitches

Planning approval has now been obtained in respect of the above, and the football foundation have confirmed the funding is in place. The pre start meeting has been held and works are due to start on site on November 8th, with completion in spring.

#### Pickering Pastures- Proposed new pavilion building

A feasibility study has now been undertaken in respect of the proposal to replace the existing ranger cabin building with a new pavilion type facility which would include a café area. This has been circulated to Open Spaces for consideration.

#### Broseley House- Demolition

Works were due to commence on site in early July but had to be delayed due to Scottish Power Energy Networks not being able to confirm a date when the internal substation would be disconnected. That work is

now programmed in and should be completed by late October as such it is anticipated that the actual demolition contractor will be able to get back on site in late October, to commence the demolition work, the contract period is 8 weeks as such the works should be completed by the year of the calendar year.

#### Cavendish School- Internal remodelling

The Internal remodelling works commenced on site in late July and were completed by early September to tie in with the start of the autumn term.

#### Lunts Heath- Eco Classroom

The installation works to create a new Eco classroom commenced on site as programmed and were completed to tie in with the start of the autumn term.

#### 6 Church Street, Runcorn Old Town- Refurbishment to form HPIJ Offices

The above project is currently out to tender. It is anticipated that, the subject to the tenders coming back within budget, that the works will commence on site in the new year and by complete by the end of March 2022

#### The Brindley- Proposed extension

Design development works are on-going in respect of the above to ensure we meet the next stage of the Town Deal Funds requirements.

#### Camden Buildings- conversion to arts/cultural hub

Design development works are on-going in respect of the above to ensure we meet the next stage of the Town Deal Funds requirements.

### **3.0 Emerging Issues**

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

#### **Financial Services**

#### **3.2 Benefits Division**

##### Discretionary Housing Payments

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are used to help people who have to pay rent who are receiving Housing Benefit or are receiving a housing cost element as part of their Universal Credit entitlement, and are struggling to pay their rent. Each year the Council is allocated DHP funding from the government that it can use to help people who are experiencing difficulty paying their rent. DHP awards are usually paid for a limited period, for example, for 12 weeks to allow a person to re-adjust their finances so they can pay their rent in the future. In 2020/21 the Council received £527,810 DHP funding from the government and this full allocation was used. On 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021 the Council was notified by the DWP of its mid-year DHP funding, which brings the total funding for 2021/22 to £394,099. This is a reduction of £133,711 and makes the DHP scheme less generous than last year. Other Liverpool City Region Councils have also experienced significant reductions in their funding allocations, and similar to ourselves will be adjusting their schemes to reflect this change.

### **3.3 Audit, Procurement & Operational Finance Division**

#### Procurement – Net Zero

The Government has recently issued a Procurement Policy Note (PPN 06/21) that sets out how Government departments, executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies should take account of suppliers' Net Zero Carbon Reduction Plans in the procurement of major contracts. Under the new arrangements, as part of assessing a supplier's technical and professional ability, in scope organisations should include, as a selection criterion, a requirement for bidding suppliers to provide a Carbon Reduction Plan confirming the supplier's commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2050 in the UK. The plan should also set out the environmental management measures that the supplier has in place and will be utilised during the performance of the contract. The new arrangements apply to any procurements advertised on or after 30 September 2021 that have an anticipated contract value of £5m per annum or greater.

Whilst the measures set out in PPN 06/21 only currently apply to major Government contracts, it is indicative of the general direction in which the UK government is travelling and it is likely that similar requirements will be extended to local authorities in due course.

#### Building Back Better: Government Plan for Health and Social Care

In September the Government announced its decision to raise taxes to fund health and social care reforms by introducing a new, UK-wide 1.25 per cent Health and Social Care Levy. As part of the plans, the Government has committed to investing £5.4 billion in Adult Social Care over the next three years to deliver funding and system reform commitments. A lot of detail still needs to be clarified but key points include:

- Care costs will be capped at £86k from October 2023;
- There will be an increase in the maximum savings limit from £23,250 to £100,000 from October 2023;
- There will be an increase in the threshold when tariff income applies from £14,250 to £20,000k from October 2023;
- There will be an increase in the Personal Expenditure Allowance for persons in residential care. The allowance is currently £24.90 per week but will rise in line with inflation from April 2022;
- There will be an increase in the Minimum Income Guarantee applied to the financial assessment for those persons in receipt of domiciliary care from April 2022;
- There will be more flexibility for persons accessing Deferred Payment Agreements.

The full impact in terms of the Council's finances cannot yet be fully determined. However, the care cost cap will require the introduction of a system to monitor individuals' spending on personal care and will have a significant impact upon workloads within the Division. It is also anticipated that the proposals will reduce the Council's income from client contributions towards care costs.

### **3.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division**

#### Comprehensive Spending Review 2021

The Comprehensive Spending Review will be published by HM Treasury on 27 October 2021. It is planned the Chancellor of the Exchequer will set out a 3 year plan for public finances over the period 2022 to 2025. Whilst not yet confirmed it is hoped this will in turn lead to a multi-year settlement for Local Government although this won't be known until December when the provisional local government settlement is announced.

The Council has contributed towards submissions on the Comprehensive Spending Review through the Liverpool City Region. This concentrates on three main themes; the need to fund demographic changes and increased unit costs in social care; an opportunity to lay the foundations for the Levelling up agenda and the need to provide local authorities with planning certainty.

### 3.5 Holiday Pay Entitlement

Following references in previous reports, there had been an absence of clear direction in legal terms on the matter of holiday pay entitlement resulting from voluntary overtime. Conflicting case-law still exists and legal cases remain pending in the UK legal system. One notable case. 'Flowers –v- East of England Ambulance Trust' was set to be a leading precedent in this matter, however during the quarter the case has been settled outside of the Court system. As such, this remains an ongoing matter and further advice is now awaited from Local Government National Employers. It may rest on local negotiation between the Council and its Joint Trade Unions. Further updates will be made as appropriate.

The outcome of government consultation on measures to restrict 'Special Severance Payments' is awaited, which will likely bring about a regulatory framework that will limit severance payments in a wide range of scenarios. Once the regulations are confirmed, the Council's Staffing Protocol will need to be redrafted, negotiated with the joint Trade Unions, and submitted to the Council's Appointments Committee for approval.

The continual need to engage agency workers to meet increased service demand in areas such as adult social care has been highlighted in previous reports, and the situation continues. The HR service is supporting a restructuring exercise in two of the Council's care homes, with an implementation date of November 2021. It is clear that a large number of vacancies will remain. This will add further pressure to the service itself, and to the recruitment service. Nursing vacancies in particular continue to prove challenging to fill.

In addition to the issue outlined above, care and nursing vacancies are expected to arise as a result of the new legislation requiring that all people working in care homes must be fully vaccinated against COVID19, or have evidenced clinical exemption, by 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021. We know at this stage that some staff will not be as they are not exempt and refuse to take the vaccine. Those employees will be dismissed from the Council as it will be illegal for them to work in the setting in which they are employed from the 11<sup>th</sup> November. Whilst some redeployment opportunities may present themselves, it is not certain, thus we cannot assume that employment can continue for those individuals with the Council.

### ICT and Administration

**3.6 Email Security:** The biggest and potentially most harmful security threat closest to all of us is Cyber, with HBC being part of the Government's infrastructure the whole organisation and its contacts are a clear target – we see this regularly, and while the service can protect you using technical controls, ultimately as an organisation we are relying upon all of our people to understand the risks and to be aware.

As Officers and Members we have to be vigilant in terms of such attacks as in reality no amount of technical security solutions or specialist systems can stop an individual wrongly giving away their secure access credentials in this way.

The vast majority of attacks use the individual's username and password to log into their own personal or work email account and send out vast numbers of spam emails from that person's account allowing these spam emails initially to get past security systems as the email address and domain are initially trusted. These attacks can send literally millions of emails in one go, ultimately bringing down the originating email system by swamping the system internally and ultimately getting the domain banned across thousands of email systems. All originated from a user allowing their details to be stolen.

The ramifications for the authority are huge and as users we have a responsibility to not be duped by such attacks – in short if you feel the email is in any way suspicious do not access any links and please contact the IT helpdesk at the earliest opportunity.

The service is happy to offer training to all Officers and Members – guidance is also available on the intranet within the ICT portal. In order to reduce the risk, ICT services will be introducing some key initiatives over the next 6 months – an enhancement to the security of e-mail, better mobile phone protection and mandatory training for new users before they are allowed to sign into the Councils systems for the first time.

## **Legal and Democracy**

**3.7** The operation of the newly adopted Code of Conduct for Members will be monitored, and any necessary amendments will be reported to the Audit & Governance Board for consideration in the first instance. Recruitment to some key points in the Department continues.

## **Property Services**

### **3.8 Carbon emission targets**

Government have brought into law a new carbon emissions reduction target of a 78% reduction over 1990 levels by 2035. This brings forward the previous target and will have the effect of speeding up the need to switch away from fossil fuels to heat and provide hot water to our buildings and move to electrically run heat pumps. APSE have been carrying out an assessment of the Council's position with regards moving forward with this agenda and will be reporting on same in due course.

### **3.9 Agile working/return to the office**

COVID-19 has necessitated the need for home working which in the main has proved successful and quite popular. As of October 1<sup>st</sup> officers are able to return to the office environment albeit to reduced occupancy levels which will be reviewed moving forward. This shift in working arrangements has presented us with the opportunity to embrace more flexible working arrangements on a more permanent basis in the future. This in turn could enable us to make better and more cost effective use of our accommodation and potentially enable us to vacate space and generate more income from renting that space out to other organisations, hence it is important that this opportunity is acted upon.

### **3.10 Ventilation guidance for safe use of buildings**

As a result of the COVID pandemic new guidance has been issued in respect of the importance of ventilation within buildings, the majority of our building have now been surveyed to assess ventilation levels and determine where there may be areas that are poorly ventilated. CO2 monitoring will be rolled out over the coming months in areas where we have determined there may be issues to help assess the quality of air. Where there are problem areas these can then be looked at to determine how best to proceed.

## **4.0 High Priority Equality Actions**

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








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

## 5.0 Performance Overview

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

## Financial Management

### Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
FS 01a	Report 2022-25 Medium Term Financial Strategy to Executive Board - <b>November 2021.</b>	
FS 01b	Report 2022/23 revenue budget, capital programme and council tax to Council - <b>March 2022.</b>	
FS 02c	Provide <b>quarterly</b> monitoring and forecasting reports on the overall budget to Executive Board.	
FS 03a	Publish the Statement of Accounts following external audit and the Annual Governance Statement <b>by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.</b>	
FS 04a	Establish Treasury Management Policy and report to Council - <b>March 2021.</b>	
FS04b	Provide monitoring reports to Executive Board <b>on a bi-annual basis.</b>	
FS 05a	Establish and report prudential indicators to Council - <b>March 2021.</b>	

### Supporting Commentary

#### FS 01a

On target to report the Medium Term Financial Strategy to Executive Board in November 2021. The financial forecast is being regularly updated.

#### FS 01b

Work has commenced with Management Team and Budget Working Group to develop budget proposals for 2022/23.

#### FS 02c

Quarter 1 monitoring report on the overall budget was reported to Executive Board on 16 September 2021. Quarter 2 budget monitoring position will be reported to Executive Board on 18 November 2021.

#### FS 03a

The Council's External Auditor (Grant Thornton UK LLP) has not yet fully commenced with the audit of the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts which has resulted in the deadline not being met.

#### FS 04a

Treasury Management Policy reported to Council on 03 March 2021

**FS04b**

On track to report to Executive Board on 18 November 2021

**FS 05a**

Prudential indicators reported to Council on 03 March 2021

**Key Performance Indicators**

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
FS LI 01	Receive an unqualified external audit opinion on the accounts.	Awaited	Yes	TBC	?	n/a
FS LI 02	Receive positive comment (annually) from the External Auditor relating to the financial standing of the Council and the systems of internal financial control.	Awaited	Yes	TBC	?	n/a
FS LI 03	Proportion of Council Tax that was due that was collected	94.14%	94.25%	54.58%	✓	↑
FS LI 04	The percentage of Business Rates which should have been received during the year that were received	96.18%	97.50%	54.76%	✓	↑
FS LI 05	Average time for processing new claims (Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction)	16.22	18	16.80	✓	↔
FS LI 07	Proportion of all supplier invoices paid within 30 days (including disputed invoices)	92.6%	93.0%	93.4%	✓	↑

**Supporting Commentary**

**FS LI 01**

External audit not expected to provide audit opinion before the end of January 2022 at the earliest

**FS LI 02**

External audit not expected to provide a conclusion on the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources until January 2022 at the earliest

**FS LI 03**

This is up by 0.69% compared with the same point last year but down by 0.47% from 2019/20. There remain uncertainty on council tax levels for the remainder of the year pending the national and local economic recovery to the pandemic.

**FS LI 04**

This is up by 1.16% compared with the same point last year but down by 2.64% from 2019/20. There remain uncertainty on business rate levels for the remainder of the year pending the national and local economic recovery to the pandemic.



**Key Objectives / milestones**

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
PPPE 01a	Promote and take forward the delivery of actions identified within the Organisational Development Strategy <b>June 2021</b>	
PPPE 01d	Embed knowledge and skills gained from first phase of Senior Leadership and Management Development Programme (MBA) <b>December 2021.</b>	
PPPE 02b	Establish 10 new apprentice placements within Council services, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation <b>March 2022</b>	
PPPE 04b	Implement resourcing plans with service management in appropriate areas <b>December 2021.</b>	
PPPE 04c	Ongoing monitoring of agency usage and spend <b>April, September, December 2021, and March 2022.</b>	

**Supporting Commentary**

**PPPE 01a**

This is progressing well. Some examples given in this report (refer to Key Developments) and the new Organisational Development & Performance Management structure above will support this further.

**PPPE 01d**

On track. Projects delivered in Autumn by Cohort 1 will be evaluated and assessed.









**PPPE 02b**

2 commenced in quarter.









**PPPE 04b/c**

Refer to narrative in Emerging Issues section.

**Key Performance Indicators**

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
PPPE LI 01	The number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness (Corporate)	10.02 (Days)	9.5 (Days)	5.58 (Days)		
PPPE LI 02	Percentage of Employees without sickness	73.74	70.00	79.48		
PPPE LI 03	Total Agency Worker Usage (number of placements – year to date)	746	650	316		
PPPE LI 04	Total Agency Worker Cost (gross cumulative cost – year to date)	£3.7M	£2.5M	£2,162,475		



Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
PPPE LI 05	The percentage of top 5% of earners that are: <sup>1</sup>					
	a) Women	63.19%	55%	63.16%		
	b) from BME communities	2.78%	2.00%	2.60%		
	c) with a disability	0.89%	8.00%	1.25%		
PPPE LI 06	Average time to recruit (Applicant Tracking System reported figure)	11 days	13 days	9.9%		

**Supporting Commentary**

**PPPE LI 01**

Figure largely as expected at this stage in year (2.56 Q1 and 3.02 Q2). At Q2 in 2021/21 this indicator was at 8.53 days.

**PPPE LI 02**

Positive, and aligned with anecdotal information elsewhere in report (was 80.65% at this time last year)

**PPPE LI 03**

Q2 outturn suggests target likely to be missed. Associated narrative included in Emerging Issues section above.

**PPPE LI 04**

Q2 outturn suggests target likely to be missed. Associated narrative included in Emerging Issues section above.

**PPPE LI 05**

Positive movement on component indicator (a), which follows improvement in 2020/21.

Fluctuation exists in (b) and (c), due to turnover.






It should be noted that recruitment in to the top 5% of earners is generally very limited, and as such scope for significant change is low, however as noted in Emerging Issues above there are 3 senior recruitments taking pace over the summer.

**PPPE LI 06**

Positive outturn, particularly in context of increased demand. Better than last quarter (11.5) and same time last year (12). This is reflective of the effort the team are putting in to complete recruitment as quickly as they can.

## ICT and Administrative Support Services

### Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
ICT 01a	Continued Enhancement of the virtualization platform to enhanced or new technologies - <b>March 2022.</b>	
ICT 01b	Further development of Cloud Services Platform - <b>March 2021.</b>	
ICT 01c	SharePoint and Records Management enhancements - <b>March 2021.</b>	
ICT 01d	Interactive Web Services Enhancement and further SharePoint Integration - <b>March 2021.</b>	
ICT 02a	Continuing improvements, enhancements and commercial use of Cloud system - <b>March 2021.</b>	

### Supporting Commentary

#### ICT 01a

Enhancements to the Halton Cloud platform continues at pace with the integration of ICT ICT 01b Vendor cloud based systems and services within our own platform.

#### ICT 01b

Enhancement planned in line with vendor software release to enhance functionality and the user experience

#### ICT 01c

Enhancement planned in line with vendor software release to enhance functionality and the user experience



#### ICT 01d





Enhancement planned in line with vendor software release to enhance functionality and the user experience

#### ICT 02a

All of the authorities' internal and external clients now successfully utilise this solution – delivering HBC services to partners, clients and internal users.

### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
ICT LI01	Average availability of the Council's operational servers (%).	100	99.00	99%		

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
ICT LI02	Average availability of the Councils WAN infrastructure (%).	100	99.00	100%		
ICT LI03	School Support SLA: % of calls responded to within <u>agreed</u> target*:					
	a) Priority 1	100	85.00	85%		
	b) Priority 2	100	90.00	90%		
	c) Priority 3	100	90.00	95%		
	d) Priority 4	100	95.00	95%		

#### ICT LI01

Remains in line with target, linked to Halton Cloud Data Centre configuration. A real achievement given the considerable levels of work undertaken over this period mainly out of hours.

#### ICT LI02




Remains in line with target. Inclusive of planned down time. Especially during these times when connectivity to the centre is key.

#### ICT LI 03

Again, this has been an unusual time with schools impacted by the pandemic and the support required changing on a daily basis with issues also changing on a daily basis. The move to online learning has now impacted the schools especially those that would not upgrade their data connections due to cost, again the Schools and importantly the Corporate teams have worked hard to support any issues that may arise.

### Legal & Democracy

#### Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
LD 01	Review constitution - <b>May 2021</b> .	
LD 02a	To ensure that all members have been given the opportunity of a having a MAP meeting where desired.	
LD 02b	To induct all new members <b>by October 2021</b> .	

#### Supporting Commentary

##### LD 01

The revised Constitution has been approved.









##### LD 02a

All members are offered a MAP meeting.

##### LD 02b

All new Members have been inducted.

### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	20 /21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
LD LI 01	No. Of Members with Personal Development Plans (56 Total).	56 (100%)	54	48 89%		
LD LI 03	Average Time taken to issue prosecutions from receipt of full instructions (working days).	10 (Days)	10 (Days)	10 (Days)		
LD LI 04	Average time taken to file application for Care proceedings at Court from receipt of all written evidence from client department (working days).	3 (Days)	3 (Days)	3 (Days)		
LD LI 05	% of Executive Board minutes published within 5 working days after the meeting.	100%	100%	100%		

#### Supporting Commentary

##### LD LI 01

All newly elected Members have been offered a PDP.

##### LD LI 03 - LD LI 05

All newly elected Members have been offered a PDP.

The target has been met.

### Community & Environment

#### Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
CE 0 1a	Deliver a promotion and educational campaign (school meals) - <b>September 2021</b> and <b>January 2022</b> .	TBC

#### Supporting Commentary

TBC


### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
CE LI 01	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Primary Schools.	Data unavailable	75%	TBC		

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
CE LI 02	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Secondary Schools.	Data unavailable	60%	TBC		
CE LI 03	Take up of school lunches (%) – primary schools.	Data unavailable	60%	TBC		
CE LI 04	Take up of school lunches (%) – secondary schools.	Data unavailable	50%	TBC		

### Property Services

#### Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
EEP 02a	Proposed new Leisure Centre, Moor Lane- Commence works on site by <b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2022</b>	
EEP 02b	Crow Wood Lane, Assisted residential development- commence on site by <b>31<sup>st</sup> December 2021</b>	
EEP 02c	Deliver agreed programmed maintenance programme to Corporate Buildings by <b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.</b>	
EEP02d	Deliver agreed programmed maintenance programme to schools by <b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.</b>	
EEP 02e	Deliver agreed decarbonisation works to Stadium by <b>31<sup>st</sup> December 2021.</b>	

#### Supporting Commentary

##### EEP 02a

The CPO Process is on-going. All objections have been withdrawn. We are now just waiting for the planning inspectorate to confirm the CPO. The existing tenants have found alternative locations and are working to vacate site by Spring 2022.

##### EEP 02b

The project has currently been put on hold by Commissioning as such this milestone will not be achieved.

##### EEP 02c

The programmed maintenance programme to corporate building is progressing and it is anticipated that the available budget will all be spent by year end.










##### EEP02d

The programmed maintenance programme to schools is progressing well, there are 18 separate projects on the programme, 10 of which have been completed across the summer period, the remaining projects are due to be completed by year end.

##### EEP 02e

The works are currently on site and progressing well, however the delivery of the air source heat units has been significantly delayed as a result of current demand so that element of the work will not be completed by December 31<sup>st</sup>.

## Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
EEP LI 01	Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions indicator (Tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e).	11354	11240	n/a		n/a
EEP LI 02	Capital receipts	£614,532, 82% of the target achieved	£1.5m based on an estimate for the amount and timing of receipts as at 20/5/2021	£280,000	19% of the target 	
EEP LI 03	Commercial and investment portfolio – rent receivable against the budget to monitor receipt of income of rents and service charges.	Investment £39,325 Commercial £319,573	Investment £44,740 Commercial £609,270	Investment £22,150 Commercial £164,706	27% of the target	
EEP LI 04	Occupancy rates of commercial and investment portfolio.	100 % Investment 90% commercial	100 % Investment 90% commercial	100 % Investment 90% commercial		
EEP LI 05	Occupancy of Widnes Market Hall.	93%	94%	97%		
EEP LI 06	Unit Costs – Office accommodation space (reported annually).	1069sqm	1058sqm	n/a		n/a

### Supporting Commentary

#### EEP LI 01

The figures are collated annually and therefore interim updates are not possible.

CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for 2020/21 amounted to 9770 which equated to a 13.9% overall reduction from 2019/20. Energy consumption in buildings actually fell by 7.6%, but with reductions in each of the other sectors together with a reduction in the kw/h-CO<sub>2</sub> conversion factor due to the increasing mix of renewal energy being generated the overall CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have reduced by almost 14%.

COVID has had a significant impact on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2020/21 with reductions across all sectors. Clearly the majority of staff have been homeworking and many buildings were closed for a period of time during lockdown. Fleet transport and business mileage were also significantly down due to homeworking.

The breakdown is as follows:- School Buildings 2798t, Corporate buildings 4385t, Unmetered supply 1502t, Fleet Transport 937t, & Business Mileage 148t. The target for 2021/22 has been set at 9672 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e, a 1% reduction, this will be difficult to achieve given the very unusual circumstances in 2020/21 as a result of COVID.

#### EEP LI 02

Two completions during Q2, 4/5 Dock Rd Widnes and land sold to Aldi at Green Oaks Way Widnes

Transactions underway of Linner Cottage and outbuildings and yard, Widnes; 67 Edinburgh Road Widnes, land Croft St Widnes is a new lease.

**EEP LI 03**

The income received has been affected by request from a number of occupiers for further rent holidays and non-payment of rent due to Covid situation. Asset management are working with colleagues in income recovery. The tenant of no 5 Granville Street has vacated and the unit is on the market. Other vacant units are, 6 Church Street Runcorn to be used for HPIJ and the former Frankie and Bennies unit at the Hive. It is unlikely that the units will be re-let until Q3. It is uncertain whether the income target will be achieved by Q4

**EEP LI 04**

There are 8 vacant properties which will be on the market or unable to market until refurbishment works eg 71 High St Runcorn or clarifying planning status eg the former bus depot Moor Lane Widnes have been completed

**EEP LI 05**

The Market management team continue to proactively engage with potential traders as a result the current rate has gone up to 97% with only 5 stalls vacant.

**EEP LI 06**

This KPI is only reported annually therefore interim figures cannot be given




## 7.0 Financial Statements

To be confirmed at the earliest opportunity





## 8.0 Application of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

### Progress Symbols

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Performance Indicator</u>
Green 	Indicates that the <u>objective is on course to be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.	<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 <i>is better</i> as compared to the same period last year.
Amber 	Indicates that performance <i>is the same</i> as compared to the same period last year.
Red 	Indicates that performance <i>is worse</i> as compared to the same period last year.
N / A 	Indicates that the measure cannot be compared to the same period last year.