

Corporate Policy and Performance Board– Priority Based Monitoring Report Q1

Reporting Period: 01st April to 30th June 2023

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Key Developments

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

Financial Services

2.2 Benefits Division

Processing Times

At 30th June 2023 processing times for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction were as follows: new claims 25.14 days and changes in circumstances 18.70 days.

Energy Bill Payment Schemes

The Discretionary Support Scheme Team has administered the two energy support schemes on behalf of the Government that covered the period 27th February 2023 – 31st May 2023, and a summary of the amounts awarded for both schemes is shown below:

1. Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding (£400 payment). Total paid £119,600 (299 awards). Example properties: park homes, narrow boats.
2. The Alternative Fuel Payment Alternative Fund (£200 payment). Total paid £5,000 (25 awards). Example properties: households who use fuel other than gas or electricity.

Universal Credit Implementation

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) statistics indicate at 11th May 2023 there were 15,969 people within Halton claiming Universal Credit. The table below shows the Universal Credit caseload in Halton on a quarterly basis over the past 14 months.

Universal Credit caseload	
Date	Caseload
1 st April 2022	15,262
30 th June 2022	15,283
30 th September 2022	15,533
31 st December 2022	15,581
31 st March 2023	15,817
11 th May 2023	15,969

2.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

Supplier Invoice Processing Performance

During Q1, 92.59% of all Council supplier invoices were paid within 30 days. This represents an improvement in performance on 2022/23 despite the Purchase to Pay Team operating at reduced capacity since the start of the year.

HMRC VAT Inspection

HMRC will be carrying out an inspection of the Council during August. The inspection will be entirely focused on the Council’s VAT accounting arrangements. The assessment has already required a significant amount of preparation work, which has included the submission of a detailed pre-visit questionnaire to HMRC.

Annual Governance Statement

As required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Council’s draft Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 has been published on the Council’s website. The document is produced following a review of the Council’s governance arrangements and it explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the Council to carry out its functions effectively. An action plan is included within the statement to address any significant governance issues identified though the review. The document was formally considered and approved by the Audit and Governance Board on 5 July 2023.

Cash Collection Contract

The Council has recently completed a successful joint procurement exercise with Knowsley Council for the renewal of the cash collection contract. The new contract has been awarded to the incumbent supplier, G4S, and takes effect on 1 August 2023.

2.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

2022/23 Financial Outturn and Statement of Accounts

The 2022/23 financial outturn position was reported to Executive Board on 15 June 2023. It was reported that net operational spend for the year was £5.161m above the approved budget, the overspend being funded from earmarked reserves. The Council’s General Fund balance as at 31 March 2023 remains at £5.149m, representing 3.7% of the Council’s 2023/24 net budget of £140.880m.

Work has been finalised on completing the Council's draft 2022/23 Statement of Accounts. The draft version of the Statement was published on the Council's website on Wednesday 04 July 2023. The Council's external auditor Grant Thornton UK LLP will commence the audit of the accounts during September 2023, with the intention of reporting the Audit Findings Report to the Audit & Governance Board on 22 November 2023

Council Tax and Business Rate Collection

Council tax collection for the first quarter of the year is 27.41%, which is very similar to at the same point last year. Cash collection for the year to date is £21.2m, this includes £0.8m collected in relation to previous year debt.

Business rates collection for the first quarter of the year is 31.76%, up by 1.58%% on this point last year. Cash collected for the year to date is £18.5m, this includes £0.5m collected in relation to previous year debt.

Council Tax Support Fund

At the start of the financial year Government announced a £100m national scheme to support economically vulnerable households with their council tax payments. The funding is to support current working age and pension age Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) claimants by up to £25. To date, the Halton has supported 8,425 households with up to £25 reductions from their council tax bill.

Halton received an allocation of £306,269 to fund the scheme and to date has paid out £201,164 to support local residents. Payments will continue to be paid to new LCTS claimants during the year. The scheme will continue to be monitored and reviewed to ensure the funding allocation is fully utilised by year-end.

2.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

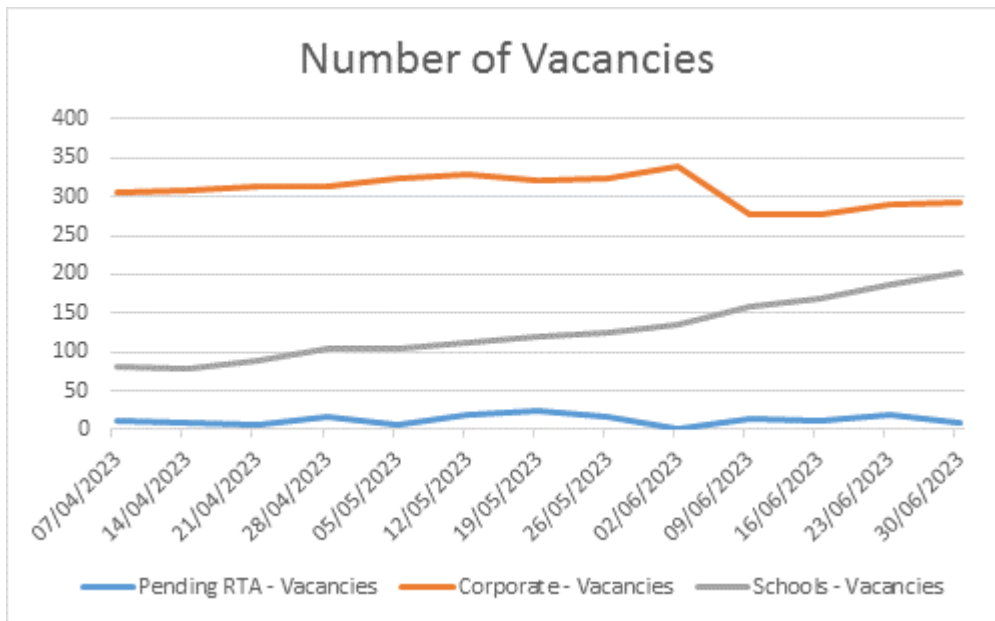
The Chief Executive's Delivery Unit came into being on 1st March 2023, forming one of four departments sitting in the Chief Executive's Directorate. The new department contains all of the services that were in the Policy, People, Performance & Efficiency Dept, with the exception of the Partnerships function – elements of which have moved to service areas within the Environment & Regeneration Directorate.

The operational HR functions now sit within a dedicated division to enable focused leadership and engagement across the Council, and are augmented with the addition of Health & Safety. The complement of services has been expanded by the addition of Communications & Marketing, and Research, Data & Intelligence, which have transferred in from other departments. In addition, the new Transformation Delivery Unit is situated within this structure. Performance reports reflect the structure and activity of the new department.

In the Operational HR Division, the Employment Relations team is currently being reviewed to implement a HR Business partnering model. This will best equip the service to support the organisation on its transformation journey and beyond.

This model will allocate resources to specific directorates to build strong working relationships adding value throughout the directorates with a focus on the workforce and early intervention regarding casework.

Recruitment demand remains consistent, with a significant upswing in demand for the processing of schools vacancies, as can be seen in the graph below.



The Resourcing team have amended recruitment workflows ahead of the busy period in schools recruitment to avoid impact to corporate recruitment. Services will find a more streamlined process where recruitment is not paused during the peak times in school recruitment. Furthermore the successful 'Adults Always On' campaign is still in progress – this is a constant advertisement alongside attraction methods using web technology to attract candidates to hard-to-fill Adult Social Care roles and has been running since early 2023. This has enabled the filling of a number of roles across the service that would otherwise have likely remained vacant.

Management Team have supported the delivery of an Emerging Leaders Programme at level 5 for 12 existing managers. The qualification will be overseen by the Organisational Development Service and delivered by the Solace Group. It is scheduled to start in September 2023. The qualification will be funded through the Apprenticeship Levy and the content and projects will be aligned to the Transformation Programme and covers the following subject areas:

- Personal and professional development
- Communication
- Leading people
- Finance
- Managing people
- Operational management
- Project management

As with all apprenticeship programmes, participants are expected to work on both theoretical and practical work-based learning. The learning is split into seven units, each lasting approximately 9 – 12 weeks, over 24 months:

E-learning take up continues to be consistent, with 2638 learning interventions delivered via the e-learning system in the quarter. This approach continues to offer an excellent return on investment and accessible way of learning for employees.

For training and development delivered face-to-face, attendance stood at 95% during the quarter. This is within tolerance levels and again represents a good return on investment.

The Transformation Delivery Unit went live on 1st April 2023, work has been undertaken and continues to develop the scope of projects alongside service areas, with a view to supporting changes within services that are designed to optimise operations, align service provision with demand, and reduce the cost of service provision.

The initial programme structure has been augmented to increase capacity as projects come on stream. The programme methodology is now becoming embedded as engagement between the Transformation Delivery Unit and service areas increases. The methodology is reflective of the 'Delivery Unit' model used in Government, and subsequently in other local authorities. It balances service involvement and ownership, with project support and challenge.

The focus is now on applying the methodology through robust arrangements to identify and realise financial savings and service optimisation. Overall governance sits with the Executive Board, with all Member briefings to take place every two months.

The Communications and Marketing service are actively supporting a range of organisational initiatives, namely the Transformation Programme, and the Family Hubs initiative in Children's Services. As the organisation changes, the service will flex its approach to supporting the business, ensuring that messaging and effective communication is targeted to the organisational activity that most requires it.

Similarly, the Research, Data and Intelligence Service is actively supporting the analysis and interpretation of data required to underpin the Council's transformation activity, and will prioritise accordingly to align with the needs of the wider programme.

The development of the Corporate Plan, and the facilitation of the 'Big Conversation' continues to be driven in the Policy area, supported by colleagues in the Communications and Marketing, and Research, Data and Intelligence Services. All PPB's received a briefing on this during the last quarter.

2.6 ICT and Administration

The department is currently made up of three distinct delivery areas Administrative Services, IT and Customer Services. Admin has been subject to review under the transformation programme to disaggregate the service with the timeline for the changes starting in July and again will be subject to further update reports.

Customer Services is also subject to change under the Transformation Front Door programme and as such the technology & Data Governance strategy is closely linked to this programme creating a period of considerable departmental change across the board.

This update needs to allow members an understanding of the direction of travel and the considerable undertaking for those involved rather than a detailed technical overview of what is a technically complex change programme one that has been running for over 12 months in parallel with BAU to deliver a step change within the delivery model ahead.

Technical Innovation and evolution are essential to any business. Many authorities over the last few years are struggling to deal with the new world in front of them, as are we.

Years of austerity, the impact of COVID and internal change is starting to pivot our internal and external customer process to provide new ways to interact with our internal markets as well as our ever increasing and demanding client bases.

There is no escaping we are switching quickly to an ever more Virtual World.

The effects of COVID have simply pushed this along at a faster pace, elevating customer expectations of the front of house and technology service demand for a multitude of features we as clients of services or employees now expect as a matter of course.

Customer expectation has changed exponentially, however do we understand what these expectations are, fully and are they reasonable?

This will be the primary objective of the ICT and Front Door programmes ahead to understand and deliver against, improving the overall customer, Journey.

Forming a Halton customer strategy needs to start by setting a Halton-wide customer vision to match our business outcomes to the customer expectation. In many cases legislation will determine some outcomes however there is no excuse to avoid customer experience – there are many ways to say ‘no’ as well as yes!

With metrics we can benchmark, we can set measurable goals, and most importantly can prioritise the actions to be taken to get where we need to be.

The programme of work will be looking at how do we, as a service organisation, personalise this customer journey to upgrade from an interaction to an improved experience where customers feel they are understood and heard?

How do we continue to customise and refine this personal journey through the multitude of service options available to our clients?

How do we prioritise the improved employee experience?

Employee engagement is essential to our success as much as process change, finances and the delivery of the technologies that support the journey.

Love it or hate it, technology is with us on this journey and in many cases, it is something that will drive our opportunity to change as well as the way we work on a day-to-day basis. Be it with our colleagues, or with our customers, be they internal or external customers, they all require personalised outcomes alongside a personalised journey.

Business or enterprise technology is an ever-evolving entity, one that is now driven by a small number of major organisations, the main player being Microsoft.

Cost within this enterprise environment is a major factor, however the technology opportunity is now driving a more integrated, simplified environment within the “Cloud” with which to interact with our colleagues and customers.

The world is becoming ever more virtual with 24/7-365 access now an expectation. If a resident wants to interact with services at 3am this should be possible – how deep that interaction goes will depend on the nature of the request but will also depend on many factors from how our web services operate through to how refined our process becomes and ultimately the cost of delivering this ability.

2.7 Legal and Democracy

The local elections on 4th May 2023 and subsequent new Member inductions were carried out very successfully.

The revised Constitution was approved at Annual Council, and the installation of the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor took place smoothly.

The recruitment process for 2 replacement solicitors was commenced and it was hoped that a Taxi Licensing Enforcement Officer would soon be appointed.

2.8 Catering - School Meals

The school meals catering service and schools have been notified that from the 31 March 2025 Halton will no longer be providing a catering provision. As a result, two alternative providers have been in contact and have presented their offering directly to schools at two separate open days hosted at the Stadium.

Schools have been notified of prices increase from September 2023. This will see the charge for free school meals rise from £2.42 to £2.65 and for paid pupils an increase from £2.50 to £2.70. This is a direct result of increased food costs and also to reflect the 2022/23 pay award.

2.9 Stadium

Senior stadium managers met with the Transformation team and began the consultation process which identified areas for development, best practice and potential risks. Since the original meeting, the transformation team have requested various information and data which will be used to formulate the reimagining of the Stadium and its commercial viability and sustainability. Questionnaires have been produced digitally and hard copies to engage with all staff at all levels.

Key performances indicators are in the process of being developed along with the associated data collection systems. These will be focused on stadium usage/occupancy and customer satisfaction.

The Stadium has recently purchased a full event stage, canopy, sound & lighting system which will allow the stadium to promote and host a variety of new events both indoor and outdoor. This will save equipment hire fees allowing the stadium to stage cost effective, quality and affordable entertainment that appeals to a new audience.

High Profile community events to date include.

- Widnes Schools Town Sports Day
- Halton Chamber of Commerce – Business Awards
- Borough Elections
- Mayors Installation

2.10 Registration Services

The service continues to deliver an award-winning statutory service.

2.11 Property Services (Operations)

St Patrick's Nursing Home Redevelopment

Design development works ongoing in respect of proposals to build a new 16 bed extension and refurbish the remaining accommodation. Works planned to be carried out in 2 phases with an estimated works cost of £2.6m. Planning application submitted.

Now looking at options to decarbonise the building as part of the scheme and in respect of this we are intending to submit a bid for additional funding to the government's decarbonisation fund as part of the City region.

St Luke's Nursing Home Refurbishment

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

Proposed New Leisure Centre Moor Lane

The contract start date was 9th January 2023, works are progressing well the reduced dig is complete, foundations and drainage is currently being installed. Contractual completion date is 3rd February 2025.

Education maintenance programme 2022/23

The 2022/23 Education maintenance programme was approved by Council in March. The programme consists of 13 separate projects with an estimated cost of circa £780k. All projects have now been completed.

Corporate Maintenance programme 2022/23

The 2022/23 Corporate maintenance programme was approved by the Asset Management Working Group. Many projects have now been completed, a few are rolling over or being deferred to next years' programme, all the available budget has been spent, other than a small amount which is being accrued to next year.

Camden Buildings, High Street- refurb to create digital/creative hub

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October and works are now progressing through to RIBA stage 4 design on 59/57. 69 is now going to be delivered as a separate project. The purchase of 63 has now been completed so design works to 63/65 will recommence in the new financial year.

Brookvale Rec- Proposed Refurbishment works

An initial feasibility study has been submitted; this is currently being updated following further consultation with the Sports Development team.

Pickering Pastures- Proposed new pavilion building

The feasibility report has been updated to reflect the increasing costs, the budget estimate for the project is £520k. Executive board approval was received in April to proceed with the project.

Cavendish School - 2 class extension

The project has been tendered and a preferred contractor is waiting to be appointed, Planning approval has now been obtained. Costs are likely to raise due to length of time between tender return and obtaining planning approval, will need to liaise with preferred contractor in due course. The works are due to commence on site August 2023.

The Brindley- Proposed extension

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October, following which design development is now progressing through RIBA stage 4. The preferred option has been agreed with a budget cost estimate of £5.6m. Planning approval is anticipated July 2023. Project to be tendered via the Chest in due course.

Runcorn Library redevelopment

Design development works ongoing to create an NHS Health & Education hub. The feasibility study has been completed and circulated for comment, budget cost £1.8m. Approval to proceed to RIBA stage 3 now obtained, these design works are now progressing.

Elite House- Redevelopment

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October, there is also a bid in to the Combined Authority however for additional funding as the Town Deal funding is insufficient to carry out the desired scheme, the outcome of this as yet unknown, it is anticipated however that a decision on that will be made prior to the end of May. The RIBA stage 2 report has been issued by the architects for comment and feedback, discussions are ongoing and it is anticipated that this will move to RIBA stage 3 once the outcome of the additional funding is known.

Changing Places Facilities

Funding has been secured for 3 Changing Places facilities which were originally planned to be in Victoria Park, Shopping City and the Stadium respectively. The works within the Stadium are now complete and the facility available for use. Planning approval has been obtained for the project in Victoria Park, this is currently on site with an estimated further six weeks to handover.

The project in Shopping City has stalled however due to the owners not committing to contributing to the funding therefore approval has now been obtained to install the facility in Halton Lea Library as an alternative, this tender was won by Parklands and they are due on site in September 2023, with an eight week programme of works.

Unit 10 Refurbishment

Works are progressing, just waiting on connection of gas main by Cadent, though this has not affected handover of the internal work which is now complete. Tarmac will take occupation and undertake their own fit out.

71 High Street

Main refurbishment programme complete with contractor returning on 17th July to rectify some dry rot which was not apparent at survey stage.

Decarbonisation Projects

Following completion of the decarbonisation works at the stadium further feasibility studies have been commissioned in respect of carrying out further work at our buildings subject to funding. We are currently working with the NW Net Zero Hub with a view to submitting a Combined Authority bid to the Decarbonisation fund in 2023. It is anticipated that this will cover 5/6 buildings, but yet to be confirmed.

Wigg Island- Demolition of former Pavilion

The demolition works are now complete.

Education maintenance programme 2023/24

The 2023/24 Education maintenance programme was approved by Council in March. The programme consists of 13 separate projects with an estimated cost of circa £780k. All projects have now been completed.

Corporate Maintenance programme 2023/24

The 2023/24 Corporate maintenance programme has been approved by the Asset Management Working Group. Design works are starting to commence on the various projects in the programme.

Education SEMH Resource base projects

There are 5 schools where we are looking at upgrading the facilities to create Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) resource bases for both KS1 & KS2 groups. All projects are currently in the early design stages, cost and programme will become clearer as the projects progress.

3.0 Emerging Issues

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

3.2 Finance - Benefits Division

Household Support Fund 4

The Division has continued to administer the Government's Household Support Fund, which is now in its fourth tranche. Household Support Fund 4 covers the period 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024 and Halton was awarded a grant allocation of £2.6m. As mentioned in the 2022/23 Q4 monitoring report, allocations of the grant have been made to a number of different Council departments and also to various voluntary sector organisations.

Spending on the Household Support Fund is underway, in line with a plan approved by Executive Board. For the period 1st April 2023 – 30th June 2023 two particular areas have reported amounts spent. Firstly, for vulnerable households with children 7,536 £12 vouchers have been issued for the summer half term holiday (1 week) to all children entitled to free school meals, and this represents expenditure of £90,432. Secondly the Discretionary Support Scheme Team have spent £51,000, and this was mainly for emergency support to include food parcels, PayPoint vouchers for gas and electricity, and other kitchen related equipment.

3.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

Transforming Public Procurement Bill

June 2023 saw some important progress on the Procurement Bill, which completed the House of Commons Report Stage and had its Third Reading on 13 June 2023. The Bill is now passing into its final stages, the first of which is the Consideration of Amendments back in the House of Lords. The House of Lords will consider whether it accepts the final changes of the Procurement Bill, following its passage through the House of Commons. If the House of Lords does not agree with all of the changes, there will be a period where the Bill passes back and forth between the two Houses as they settle on the Bill's final details.

It has been confirmed that following Royal Assent, the Procurement Act will commence on or around October 2024. This delayed commencement allows for consultation on, and the implementation of, the necessary secondary legislation that will sit under the new Procurement Act, as well as the six-month lead-in period.

The consultation on the secondary legislation, which is split into two parts, has now commenced. The first part consults on draft regulations to implement the Procurement Bill, and runs from 19 June 2023 to 28 July 2023. The consultation predominantly focuses on areas of the Procurement Bill that require lists, calculations or further definitions to be used in practice.

At the time of writing, the second part of the consultation is yet to be released. It will however cover the transparency provisions and notices that will be used by contracting authorities in order to fulfil their legal requirements under the Procurement Act. It will also include information on the proposed approach by the Cabinet Office on transitional arrangements for procurements already underway at the time the new regime comes into force.

As previously reported, at this stage it remains uncertain as to what extent the changes will impact on the Council's procurement arrangements. However, it is important to note that the new regulations will only apply to above threshold (i.e. higher value) procurement activity. The majority of the Council's procurement is below threshold and will therefore be unaffected.

3.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

Office for Local Government (Oflog)

On 4 July 2023, DLUHC officially launched the Office for Local Government (Oflog). It will initially operate as an office of DLUHC (meaning it is part of the department rather than a separate agency), but the Government intends Oflog to eventually become independent.

The Government's stated intention behind the launching of Oflog is to empower citizens with information about their local authority, increase local leaders' and councils' understanding of their relative performance and increase central government's understanding of local government performance.

One of the objectives of Oflog is the publication of the Local Authority Data Explorer tool which is intended to bring together finance and performance information from existing data and allow local authority comparisons against particular outcome themes. The first iteration will look at finance, adult skills, adult social care and waste, with future iterations expanding the range of areas covered. The Government's aim is that, over time, Oflog provides contextual and explanatory information alongside the local authority comparisons.

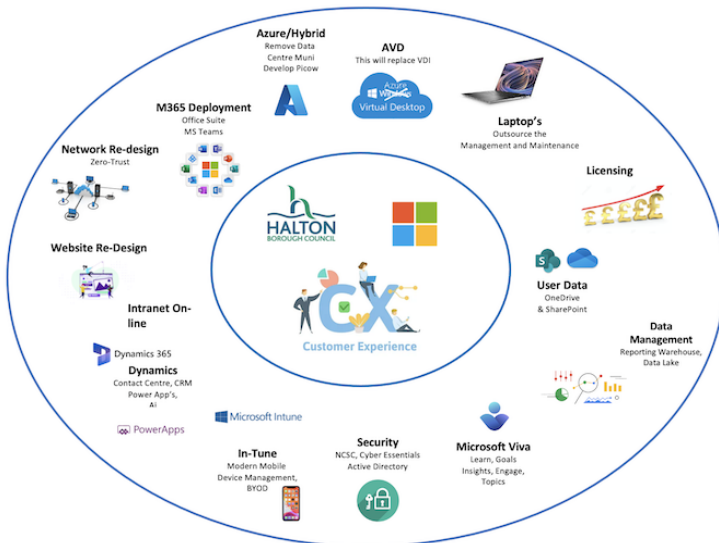
3.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

The 2023/24 pay award remains unresolved. The Unison industrial action ballot has recently closed, however other formal ballots are still taking place. Formal notification of the ballot outcomes at a national level have yet to be announced, therefore the pay award negotiations are still ongoing and the implementation of the pay award will be delayed.

Use of agency workers continues to remain high in the Council, particularly in Adults and Children's Services where labour market conditions remain extremely tight. This also correlates to a consistently high number of vacancies in the staffing establishment (see recruitment update in Key Developments above). There are no signs of this abating, however inflationary increases in rates are pushing spend higher. A dedicated workstream within the Transformation Programme is now focused on this business issue, adding challenge and capacity to operational service areas to seek solutions to bring usage and associated spend down.

3.6 ICT

The Halton solution and current IT programme will deliver considerable change over the coming months through a brand-new user experience covering every aspect of the new Microsoft 365 (M365) platform's capability. A solution currently that is under review by external IT Auditors. Enjoying positive feedback over our approach to deployment of the platform as a whole, rather than piece meal.



The deployment will be built to the new government driven Cyber Essentials Plus standards in line with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) guidelines. As such the working environment for a government body as ourselves will be secured and managed to an audited compliance standard subject to regular audit by NCSC/DLUHC.

DLUHC funding was awarded to the project to enhance and develop these standards and again is subject to quarterly monitoring reviews of progress to ensure the funding delivers the key priority outcomes that were set out as part of the funding agreement.

As noted, the improved customer journey is essential to the delivery of a successful programme of works be that internal or external. Over the next few months there will be a considerable focus upon the internal customer experience for all officers linking into the corporate networks and applications.

The development and deployment of M365, bring with it a step change in how the IT departments and Teams manage and deploy services.

This ranges from extensive changes in Security compliance to adhere to the new National Cyber Security Centre NCSC, and DLUHC compliance regulations that are now part of statutory audit requirement, through to changes in network, systems and service management.

The deployment of the backend management systems for M365 will be completed mid Quarter 2, with the objective of deploying the front-end user experience to Officers toward the end of Q2. Many dependencies are in front of the teams with changes to the telephony provision and associated systems as Skype for Business will be removed and Teams will become the main telephony solution for both internal and external calls. This brings with it complexity in terms of porting over our phone number range and step changes in the way the call and digital traffic will be directed.

A new contract for Laptop was approved by the Executive Board mid-June, with the contract completed soon after, the delivery of devices is expected early August, these devices will be part of a new platform solution for all officers once linked with the new M365 user environment. Covered by a full five year replacement warranty and fully insured for the 5 years period of ownership.

As noted above the disaggregation of the central administration service is underway with formal staffing consultation now in place:

Report to Steering Group – 29th June
Open Consultation via email – 3rd July
Close consultation 28th July
Final report to Steering Group -17th August
At Risk – 21st August for 90 days
New structure implemented 13th November 2023

3.7 Legal and Democracy

Work will continue with Cheshire & Merseyside colleagues on the establishment and terms of reference for the Health & Care Partnership. It is hoped that it will be brought to Council in October.

The pressures in the Education & Social Care team in Legal Services are expected to continue and it is hoped that the recruitment issues are resolved shortly.

3.8 Catering - School Meals

In light of the fairly recent decision to cease the HBC School Meals service from 31 March 2025.

Recruitment and retention has become a real concern.

Staff turnover is at an all time high and motivating staff is becoming more difficult.

A reduced catering provision may be required in September if schools are not fully staffed.

3.9 Stadium

Contractual Negotiations

- Everton FC
- Halton Table Tennis
- DCBL Sponsorship

Atlas Security (Term Contractor)

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

Widnes Vikings

Overall attendances have reduced, this has the following impact.

- Reduced Income generation from secondary spend.

Staging costs remain same unless contractual arrangements are reviewed to reflect the current levels of attendance. (Transformation programme)

3.10 Registration Services

The service continues to strive to meet the KPIs set out by the General Register Office. However, it is reliant on external factors to work in a timely manner.

3.11 Property Services (Operations)

Protect Duty

The 'Protect Duty', more commonly known as Martyn's Law is due to come in to force later in the year. The legislation will place a requirement on those responsible for certain publicly accessible buildings, locations and venues to consider the threat from terrorism and to implement appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures. It will mainly focus on the requirement to undertake risk assessments of the various locations following which plans must be put in place in respect of implementing appropriate mitigation measures. The impact of this is that it may likely mean the introduction of measures such as public address voice alarm (PAVA) systems in certain venues where not already installed together with the enhancement of other factors such as street furniture, e.g. bollards, to prevent vehicular access to certain areas.

Accommodation review

With the new agile approach to working since the COVID pandemic, i.e. with office based staff only needing to be in the office for a minimum of 40% of the time, subject to service requirements, our main office accommodation is now significantly underutilised which gives us an opportunity to rationalise our office bases. Following on from a report produced in January 2023 in to our accommodation a Members working group has been set up and had a first meeting to start looking at how we can rationalise our main office accommodation to ensure the space is used more effectively in the future and to help generate revenue savings. Future updates will be given as this work progresses.

Rising Construction Costs

Construction costs have been rising significantly in the recent past which is having an impact across all projects. Whilst all sectors in industry have been affected by inflation, the construction industry appears to have been hit particularly hard with certain sectors, such as steelwork production, seeing increases in costs of up to 100%. The future outlook at present is that tender prices are unlikely to fall in the short to medium term, the hope being that these may settle down in the longer term.

Carbon emission targets

Halton's Climate Change Action Plan has set a target for the Council's own carbon emissions to reach net zero by 2040 in line with the Liverpool City region. We are currently working in conjunction with the NW Zero Carbon Hub with a view to submitting a Combined Authority bid in the Autumn of 2023 when the next round of the government's decarbonisation fund opens up. This will likely cover 5 or 6 of our buildings where the boiler plant is nearing the end of its useful life and if successful will allow us to electrify the heat & hot water provision.

4.0 High Priority Equality Actions

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

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


5.0 Performance Overview

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

Financial Management




Key Objectives / milestones

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


Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Report 2024-27 Medium Term Financial Strategy to Executive Board - November 2023 .		On target to report the Medium Term Financial Strategy to Executive Board in November 2023. The financial forecast is being regularly updated.

Report 2024/25 revenue budget, capital programme and council tax to Council - March 2024.		Work has commenced with Management Team and the Transformation Board to develop efficiency targets for 2024/25 onwards. This is in addition to 2024/25 and 2025/26 savings previously agreed by Council in February 2023.
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Ref	Objective
FS 02	To effect financial prudence by assisting managers to control their budgets by monitoring spending and providing timely and accurate financial reports.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Provide monthly financial reports to budget holders within 8 days of month end.		Reports all issued on schedule to date.
Provide quarterly financial monitoring reports to Operational Directors for inclusion in Performance Monitoring Reports.		Quarter 1 reports are in the process of being finalised and will be shared with Operational Directors for inclusion in Performance Monitoring Reports.
Provide quarterly monitoring and forecasting reports on the overall budget to Executive Board.		Quarter 1 monitoring report on the overall budget will go to Executive Board on 14 September 2023.



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

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Publish the Statement of Accounts following external audit and the Annual Governance Statement by 30th September 2023.		The draft accounts were published and shared with the External Auditor on 04 July 2023. The External Auditor will not be in a position to commence the audit of accounts until the start of September, with the Audit Findings Report expected to be reported to Audit & Governance Board in November 2023





Ref	Objective
FS 04	Make best use of cash resources available to the Council and meet its statutory responsibility by setting, implementing and monitoring the Treasury Management Policy.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Establish Treasury Management Policy and report to Council - March 2023 .		Treasury Management Policy reported to Council on 08 March 2023
Provide monitoring reports to Executive Board on a bi-annual basis.		On track to report to Executive Board

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

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Establish and report prudential indicators to Council - March 2023 .		Prudential indicators reported to Council on 08 March 2023.
Provide monitoring reports to the Executive Board on a bi-annual basis.		On track to report to Executive Board

Key Performance Indicators


Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q1 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
FS LI 01	Receive an unqualified external audit opinion on the accounts	Yes	Awaited			N/A	External audit expected to provide the audit opinion in November 2023.
FS LI 02	Receive an unqualified VFM opinion from the Council's External Auditor	Yes	Awaited			N/A	External audit not expected to provide VFM opinion until November 2023 at the earliest.
FS LI 03	Proportion of Council Tax that was due that was collected	94.14%	94.25%	27.41%			This is the same position compared with the same point last year.





Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q1 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
FS LI 04	The percentage of Business Rates which should have been received during the year that were received	96.18%	97.50%	31.76%			This is up by 1.58% compared with the same point last year.
FS LI 05	Average time for processing new claims (Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction)	23.71	18	25.14			The Benefits Service is suffering unprecedented levels of staff sickness, in addition two members of staff have recently left, and another member of staff has been on maternity leave for 12 months.
FS LI 06	Average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances	9.55	8	18.70			The Benefits Service is suffering unprecedented levels of staff sickness, in addition two members of staff have recently left, and another member of staff has been on maternity leave for 12 months.
FS LI 07	Proportion of all supplier invoices paid within 30 days (including disputed invoices)	91.13%	92.0%	92.59%			Just below target

Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit



Key Objectives / milestones

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


Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Promote and take forward the delivery of actions identified within the Organisational Development Strategy September 2023		Strategy reviewed slightly. Organisational Development focus aligned to requirements of the Transformation Programme and will be tailored accordingly.

Regular engagement with Management Team to identify areas of challenge and develop appropriate strategic responses June, September, December 2023, and March 2024.		This is scheduled periodically. Refer to Key developments above for details of engagement during quarter.
Embed knowledge and skills gained from Senior Leadership and Management Development Programmes (MBA / MSc) December 2023.		This will be particularly targeted to supporting Transformation projects.
Reconfigure Leadership and Management development in the organisation to align with Transformation Programme principles December 2023.		Currently under consideration, collaborating with LCR Combined Authority colleagues and local university.
Monitor the embedding of knowledge and skills gained through previously delivered in-house modular Leadership and Management development activity. Ongoing and report in December 2023.		Important to ensure return on investment and to inform future programmed support.


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

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Establish 20 new apprentice placements within Council services, utilising existing vacancies, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.		Policy position amended to use funding attached to specific vacancies on a 'grow our own' basis.
Establish 20 new existing employee apprenticeships to enable up-skilling in a range of business areas, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.		As immediately above. Also refer to Key Developments for details of use of Levy to fund management development.



Ref	Objective
CXDU 03	Optimise the use of the Agency Worker contract across Council services, to secure ongoing reductions in the incidence and cost of agency usage, and to ensure that correct and appropriate resourcing solutions are being deployed across Council services.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Review and consider most appropriate resourcing mix in collaboration with service management in areas of highest agency usage (Transformation Programme) December 2023.		Now a key strand of Transformation Programme. Refer to Emerging Issues above for more information









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










Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Identify service areas with highest consistent recruitment demand, turnover, and low attraction rates. Develop tailored solutions. (Transformation Programme) December 2023.		Now a key strand of Transformation Programme. Refer to Key Developments and Emerging Issues above for more information

Ref	Objective
CXDU 05	Develop and implement an organisation wide change programme – The Future Work Programme - to evaluate and introduce revised working practices following to meet the requirements of the changing labour market and employee expectation in the post-pandemic environment (to include use of accommodation, HR policy and practice, wellbeing support, application of technology)

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Use findings of Corporate Accommodation Review (2023) to determine available workspace capacity and develop optimum balance of 'staff to space'. December 2023.		Corporate Accommodation Review in progress, overseen by Asset Management Working Group. This will be supported by Transformation Programme Resources.
Develop contractual model to meet business requirements of 'staff to space' balance. March 2024		Work for Q4 2023/24.



Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q1 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXDU LI 01	Average FTE days lost to sickness	12.98 (Days)	9.5 (Days)	2.67 (Days)			Better outturn than at Q1 of 2022/23. Refer to narrative in Key Developments above around the implementation of HR Business Partnering to increase effectiveness in this area.
CXDU LI 02	Percentage of Employees without sickness	66.45	70.00	87.65			Higher than same period last year and significantly better than outturn for whole of 2022/23.
CXDU LI 03	Total Full Time Equivalent Staffing Establishment (Indicator for information only)	3,204	For information Only		For information Only	For information Only	Reported for information purposes only.
CXDU LI 04	Total Staff (head count) (Indicator for information only)	4,127					
CXDU LI 05	Total Agency Worker Usage (number of placements – year to date)	766	650	344			Outturn continues to be driven by high usage in Children's and Adults Services, resulting from labour market conditions, however usage across other areas to cover is more prevalent than previous years
CXDU LI 06	Total Agency Worker Cost (cumulative gross cost – year to date)	£8.34m	£5.0m	£2.29m			See commentary for LI 05 immediately above





Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q1 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXDU L109	The percentage of top 5% of earners that are:	61.45%	55%	61.45%			Fluctuation exists in (a), (b) and (c), due to turnover. It should be noted that recruitment in to the top 5% of earners is not generally high volume, and as such scope for significant change over time is low.
	a) Women	2.7%	2.0%	2.7%			
	b) From BME communities	0%	8.0%	0%			
	c) With a disability						
CXDU LI 10	No of staff declaring that they meet the definition of disability within the Equality Act 2010 as a % of the total workforce.	1.25%	10.00%	1.29%			Fluctuation exists due to turnover and the indicator outturn reflects self-declaration. The 10% target reflects the wider Halton community. Despite the mismatch, it is important that this indicator continues to be monitored.
CXDU LI 11	Minority Ethnic community staff as % of total workforce.	0.99%	1.00%	1.31%			Shows improvement however fluctuation exists due to turnover and outturn tends to hover around target level.
CXDU LI 12	Average time to recruit (Applicant Tracking System reported figure)	19 Days	12.2 Days	Days			Outturn demonstrates the number of days taken from vacancy closing date to completion of recruitment.

Key Objectives / milestones




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

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Continued Enhancement and delivery of the E5, M365, Azure platforms to enhance and deliver new technologies into the authority - March 2024.		Significant progress has been made in the vital early planning staged for the effective deployment of Office 365 and Azure Cloud services. Many user data sets have been migrated and will continue through Q2 when it is envisaged will be completed.
Delivery of the Front Door transformation programme delivering changes in process, customer contact and customer journey - March 2024.		The first of the services to transfer over from legal is the transfer of land searches function now complete and transfer of post, income and budget in process with delivery through the RMU is now underway.
The continued development of the Records Management Unit enhancing all opportunities and creating a central fulfilment centre within - March 2024.		Ongoing development has included enhancing support for Information Management and prevention of data loss, which includes enhancements that have been implemented in respect of hybrid mail.
Development of Interactive Services, through integration with the Contact Centre and One Stop Shop's - March 2024.		An evolving programme of work moving now at pace - development of the project documentation and objective set is now underway and will be reported against as the department evolves and changes with the delivery of the objectives.
Management and development of commercial ICT opportunity within desktop, hosting and DR provision - March 2024.		The continued development and delivery of the Finance solution into partners within the city region continues with additional services and deliveries continually sought
Continued compliance with Central Government and NCSC Security guidelines and compliance requirements – March 2024.		Actively monitored by DLUHC consultancy – progress has been good through Q1, on target.



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





Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Delivery, deployment and Management of the E5, M365, Azure managed cloud platforms, enhancing user experience. - March 2024.		Ongoing preparatory work in the form of workshops with support staff provided by contracted support organisation. Most initial configuration of the Councils Microsoft Azure Tenant has been completed, currently working on the development of the end user experience, which is expected to be completed by the end of Q2.
Continued development and internal, commercial use of the Print Unit, Records management Unit - March 2024.		Ongoing development has included enhancing support for Information Management and prevention of data loss, which includes enhancements that have been implemented in respect of hybrid mail. The transfer of land search functions now complete and transfer of post, income and budget in process and delivery through the RMU is now underway.
Continued development of Contact Centre and One Stop Shop Services/Facilities/Integration with Authority wide process - March 2024. development and internal, commercial use of the Print Unit, Records management Unit - March 2024.		With the advent of the Front door/Customer Journey transformation programme, the department will evolve at pace and begin to report against developments over the coming months as the objectives are set.
The development of improved information governance and Security compliance in line with government guidelines - March 2024.		This has been built into the configuration of the Councils Microsoft Tenancy and will continue to be enhanced and reported via the SIRO reports to Management Team. These changes will continue to evolve as the deployment of the new transformed ICT platform matures. This is part of a gradual change programme supported by the Councils ICT Security Programme to minimise disruption to users, while enhancing capabilities and improving the Councils security and compliance position.

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

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
The delivery of the Front Door transformation programmes across Admin and Support Services - March 2023 .		The disaggregation of the Administrative Support Division is now underway as part of the transformation programme greater detail within the body of this report.
The delivery of new and enhanced IT Security Management and Compliance systems/facilities across the authority's user base - March 2024 .		Most preparatory work has been completed. The onboarding of a Security Operations Centre will be the priority for Q2 and Q3
The delivery of new and enhanced technology provision across the authority's user base - March 2024 .		Users have already been migrated for their email and calendar facilities. These will now be further enhanced to ensure improved data loss prevention and security of the council's information assets.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q1 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
ICT LI 01	Average availability of the Council's M365 Systems (%).	N/A	99.9%	TBA	TBA	TBA	This new KPI relates to the new M365 platform currently under development - availability stats are unavailable at this stage but as the deployment progresses this stat will become valid
ICT LI 02	Security Incidents across quarter	N/A	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	In line with the delivery of the new M365 platform this statistic will be monitored by new systems currently under development – Again to evolve with the programme of work.
ICT LI 03	Service Desk Call Resolution	86.56%	90%	87.3%			The Service Desk continues to be challenging however there are plans (integrated with the Customer Journey project and M365 delivery) to automate 'self-help' process. From Password reset to many other basic requirement freeing the service desk to deliver against the more complex requirement

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q1 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
ICT LI 04	Average working days from delivery to completion of a new Laptop.	1 (Days)	1 (Days)	TBA	TBA	TBA	Again, a new KPI that will evolve with the considerable programme of work underway. With the advent of the new Dell Laptop contract completed mid-June, this new stat will evolve with the M365 role out plan.
ICT LI 05	Number of resolved customer contacts – Contact Centre	27500	27000	28190			The level of calls into the contact centre continues to rise, with seasonal and service dependant increases as the financial strain upon residents increases. Along with the increase in services offered by the team.
ICT LI	Number of resolved contacts – One Stop Shop's	15500	15500	16140			The level of foot fall into the Shops continues to rise, with seasonal and service dependant increases as the financial strain upon residents increases. Along with the increase in services offered by the team.



Legal & Democracy

Key Objectives / milestones









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



Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Review constitution - May 2023.		The revised constitution was approved at Annual Council.

Ref	Objective
LD 02	To provide efficient and effective Democratic Support Services that provides Elected Members, as key decision makers, with the necessary information, support and training opportunities to fulfil their individual potential and management and governance role effectively.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
To ensure that all members have been given the opportunity of a having a MAP meeting where desired.		All members have been offered a MAP meeting.
To induct all new members by October 2023 .		The new Members have been inducted

Key Performance Indicators



Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q1 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
LD LI 01	No. Of Members with Personal Development Plans (54 Total).	54	54	54			All Members are offered a MAP. All newly elected Members completed an initial MAP in May 2023.
LD LI 02	Percentage of Members attending at least one organised Training Event.	52 98%	54 100%	25 (46%)			All Members are offered a hybrid development programme via in-house officer training and e-Learning via the L&D Portal. Take up has been positive in Q1 but it is a matter of personal choice.
LD LI 03	Average Time taken to issue prosecutions from receipt of full instructions (working days).	10 (Days)	10 (Days)	10 (Days)			This target has been met.
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)			This target has been met.

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q1 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
LD LI 05	% of Executive Board minutes published within 5 working days after the meeting.	100%	100%	100%			This target has been met.


Community & Environment

Key Objectives / milestones

















CE 05	To routinely use customer feedback to drive forward service improvement in the Registration Service
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Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Ensure our services are available to those who wish to or who need to use them by providing accessible information in a range of ways (e.g. written information, online services).		Monitoring and reviewing our lessons learned based on customer feedback, comments and complaints
Seek the views of the local community and make adjustments to our service delivery when appropriate, based on customer feedback, to improve the service going forward. Where feedback cannot be acted upon, an explanation will be given.		You Said... We Did..... outcomes are published

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

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Business Plan & Marketing Strategy		This will be heavily focused around the Transformation recommendations. Once Management have received these they will plan accordingly and produce/develop KPIs that are relevant.








Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q1 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CE LI 10	Registration Service - Births - 98% registered within 42 days	100%	100%	100%			Figures in line with expectation.
CE LI 11	Registration Service - Deaths with MCCDs (no coronial involvement) - 90% registered within 5 days	87%*	100%	97.16%			Where the service has not met the required 90% KPI, this is due to GPs signing death certificates on day 4 or later. <i>*Between April 22 and March 23 the service registered 362 deaths without coroner involvement. 315 of these were registered within the 5 days (87%).</i>
CE LI 12	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Primary Schools.		75%	71%			No commentary provided
CE LI 13	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Secondary Schools.		60%	64%			No commentary provided
CE LI 14	Take up of school lunches (%) – primary schools.		60%	60 %			No commentary provided
CE LI 15	Take up of school lunches (%) – secondary schools.		50%	57%			No commentary provided
CE LI 16	Room Occupancy – Meetings (Box Level)	12.34%	40%	33.7%			New KPI
CE LI 17	Room Occupancy – Conferences (Bridge & Karalius)	50.19%	60%	63.9%			New KPI

Property Services

Key Objectives / milestones

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

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Ensure the leisure centre is on track on 31st March 2024 both in terms of time and cost by project managing it throughout the year.		Leisure Centre is on track in terms of time and budgets
Ensure the contractor commences on site with the major upgrade works at both St Patrick's and St Luke's by 1st Sept 2023.		Both St Patricks and St Lukes are on target to commence on site by 1 st September 2023.
Ensure all the projects are progressed in line with the school maintenance programme and are delivered by 31st March 2024.		All school projects on track, some sites already on site and rest are programmed to start in the next few weeks. All projects due to be completed on site and final accounts finalised by 31 st March 2024
Ensure all the projects are progressed in line with the corporate maintenance programme and are delivered by 31st March 2024.		All projects for corporate buildings are progressing, and are all due to completion of works on site and final accounts finalised by 31 st March 2024
Submit a decarbonisation funding bid in conjunction with the Combined Authority by October 2023 and be successful in having the funding approved by 31 st March 2024.		Funding bid on track for submission by October 2023
Ensure there is a wide and varied mix of commodities and services on offer in the Market and ensure occupancy levels are maintained or increased by 31st March 2024.		There is a good and varied mix of commodities available at Widnes Market, and various events over the summer have been scheduled to increase the footfall and highlight that Widnes Market is a central part of the town centre.
Ensure all necessary servicing, and repairs and maintenance is carried out within our properties by 31st March 2024 and ensure building managers are satisfied with the service provided.		All servicing, repairs and maintenance at corporate properties is ongoing. All servicing for 23/24 will be completed by 31 st March 2024. Building managers are periodically provided with questionnaires to ensure they are happy with service provided.


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



Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
All EDRs to be completed by September 23	U	DM EDRs are booked in for September Asset Management Team – only one permanent members of staff to undertake EDRs and uncertain if the target will be met due to staff changes Adult Learning Team – All EDRs to be booked in by September (tutors return early September) All Regeneration and Business Growth Team EDRs to be in place by September 2023.

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

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Scheme in Place September 2023	U	Scheme in Place September 2023
Scheme finalised March 2025	U	Scheme finalised March 2025

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

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Funding Secured Q3 2023 / 2024		Discussions are ongoing with funding providers and the CA in regard to Investment Zones.

Procurement Q4 2023 / 2024		Initial discussions with Procure Partnerships to utilise framework for procurement
Groundbreaking Q1 2024 2025		The current programme is targeting a start on site for April 2024.

Key Performance Indicators

OPERATIONAL ISSUES	BASELINE POSITION	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 1	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 3	INTERVENTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Climate change agenda and carbon emissions	CO2 emissions for 2021/22 amount to 9327 tonnes	Reduce emissions by 1%	Reduce emissions by 5%	<p>Submit a funding bid and obtain funding to carry out decarbonisation works to various buildings.</p> <p>Continue to deliver the LED lighting replacement programme.</p> <p>Carry out further rationalisation of our property portfolio to reduce emissions.</p> <p>Help carry out education programme for officers and Members alike</p>	
Level of satisfaction with repair & maintenance service delivered via the FM team	75% of surveys returned were rated as either good or excellent	80% Of surveys returned rated as either good or excellent	85% Of surveys returned rated as either good or excellent	<p>Issue questionnaires to building managers in order to rate the level of service provided.</p> <p>Continue to deliver a repairs and maintenance service in a timely manner, with quality contractors.</p> <p>Continue with the procurement of contractors, when necessary, based on best value principles.</p>	

7.0 Financial Statements

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Revenue Budget as at 30 June 2023

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	6,576	1,480	1,495	(15)	(25)
Insurances	930	545	495	50	(41)
Supplies & Services	357	180	274	(94)	(101)
Rent Allowances	35,500	7,232	7,232	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,748	360	286	74	112
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	18	9	9	8
Discretionary Social Fund	351	66	42	24	24
Discretionary Housing Payments	300	52	52	0	0
Household Support Fund Expenditure	2,000	59	59	0	0
LCR Levy	2,241	560	560	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	17	0	0	0	17
Bad Debt Provision	77	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	50,167	10,552	10,504	48	(6)
Income					
Other Fees & Charges	-329	-90	-89	(1)	(7)
Burdens Grant	-60	-60	-88	28	28
Dedicated schools Grant	-123	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Liability Order	-541	-230	-183	(47)	(49)
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	0
Schools SLAs	-295	-295	-282	(13)	(13)
LCR Reimbursement	-2,241	-560	-560	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-400	-30	-30	0	0
Rent Allowances	-34,800	-6,851	-6,851	0	0
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-18	-25	7	8
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-300	-93	-93	0	0
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-515	-130	-151	21	21
Universal Credits	-5	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Admin Grant	-204	0	0	0	0
Household Support Fund Grant	-2,000	0	0	0	0
Energy Bills Support	-245	-245	-245	0	0
Alternative Fuel	-42	-42	-42	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grants	-142	-35	-45	10	18
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-82	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-42,551	-8,679	-8,684	5	6
Net Operational Expenditure	7,616	1,873	1,820	53	0
Recharges					
Premises Support	268	67	67	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,069	517	517	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,330	-1,332	-1,332	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,993	-748	-748	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	4,623	1,125	1,072	53	0

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of June 2023 the department is reporting a small net underspend against budget. It is currently forecast that net spend for the department will be on track to the approved budget as at the end of the financial year.

Employee costs for the year are expected to marginally exceed the budget position, this is based on increased employee costs from the proposed 2023/24 pay deal.

The most notable area of underspend is concessionary travel, which is currently estimated to achieve an underspend against budget of £0.112m at the end of the financial year. Concessionary travel has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic; overall usage levels are still lower than pre covid levels. It is envisaged that support for operators to ensure sustainability of bus routes will drop towards the end of the year which may increase the overall outturn position, this will be reviewed at further points later in the year.



There are risks within the budget which will be reviewed at regular points throughout the year. This includes the yet to be agreed pay deal and rent allowances which continue to be an area of concern. Increased demand for supported accommodation results in increased costs for the Council over and above the housing benefit grant received.. This should ideally net to zero, however Government will only support up to a nominal figure after which, 60% will come from housing benefits and the remaining 40% is up to the Council to support.








Approved 2023/24 Savings




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

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Progress Against Agreed Savings

Ref	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
F1	Client Finance	109	Increase by £3 per week the charge to clients for the Appointeeships Service to ensure full cost recovery.	45	0	0		Implemented in April 2023 and income budget increased accordingly
F6	Income Control	118	Removal of payment kiosks which are now significantly under-utilised. The ceasing of annual rental and licence costs will provide a saving. Residents can instead make payments at Paypoint outlets.	20	0	0		Implemented April 2023 and expenditure budgets reduced accordingly

F8	Insurance	1,043	Reduction in the insurance budgets, following a review of claims history over recent years with advice from the Council's insurance broker. The majority of claims are provided for via self-insurance, with external policies providing cover for exceptional or potentially high cost claims.	135	0	0		Implemented April 2023 and expenditure budgets reduced accordingly
F9	Internal Audit	300	Restructure in light of potential retirements over the next two years within the Internal Audit Team.	0	0	50		Planned restructure to take place during 2024/25 and to be implemented 1 April 2025
F11	Purchase to Pay	27	Increase in the target income budgets for the Early Payment Scheme (£15k) and the Corporate Card Programme rebate (£15k)	30	0	0		Implemented 2023/24 income budgets increased accordingly
F12	Benefits Processing & Administration	216	Deletion of a 1.0fte vacant Housing Benefit Officer Post and a 0.5fte vacant Visiting Officer Post.	55	0	0		These two vacant posts accepted for a saving in 2023/24 and can be deleted from the structure.
F13	Discretionary Support Scheme	221	Review the roles, procedures and structure of the team.	0	25	0		A review of the DSS structure will be undertaken in 2024/25.
F15	Business Rates	-26	Increase the charge to Halton Chamber of Commerce for providing billing and collection of Business Improvement District (BID) income.	2	0	0		2023/24 operating agreement between the Council and Halton Chamber of Commerce still to be agreed.
F16	Concessionary Travel	1,892	Due to a decrease in passenger numbers following Covid, it is considered that the budget for concessionary travel costs can be reduced. The budget was underspent by £421k	150	0	0		On Target

			(20%) in 2021/22. A reduction in this budget will not prevent any eligible concessionary passenger from still being able to travel.					
F17	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	40	40		On target, summons cost increased for 2023/24
F17 Cont	Council Tax	N/A	Establish a new post dedicated to reviewing council tax exemptions. It is considered at least a 3% reduction in Single Person Discount awards could be achieved, generating approximately £150k of additional council tax income, less the cost of the new post.	116	0	0		Post appointed to and review of exemptions to commence over the next quarter.
F18	Financial Management - Treasury Management	1,152	Closer management of medium- to long-term cash balances will give greater opportunity to invest in higher interest bearing accounts due to increasing interest rates.	300	0	0		Interest payable on target to achieve increased target.
Total Finance Department				893	65	90		

Chief Executive's Delivery Unit

Revenue Budget as at 30 June 2023

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	2,678	650	572	78	229
Employees Training	117	25	23	2	6
Apprenticeship Levy	300	20	43	(23)	(143)
Supplies & Services	296	50	39	11	26
Total Expenditure	3,391	745	677	68	118
Income					
Fees & Charges	-211	-45	-44	(1)	1
Schools SLA	-533	-440	-417	(23)	(77)
Transfer from Reserves	-87	-87	-87	0	0
Total Income	-831	-572	-548	(24)	(76)
Net Operational Expenditure	2,560	173	129	44	42
Recharges					
Premises Support	117	29	29	0	0
Transport	972	243	243	0	0
Central Support	53	0	0	0	0
Asset Rental Support	-5,491	-1,373	-1,373	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	52	13	13	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,297	-1,088	-1,088	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-1,737	-915	-959	44	42

Comments on the above figures

With the formal introduction of the Transformation Programme, the Chief Executive's Delivery Unit (previously Policy, People, Performance & Efficiency) is undergoing a period of change. The department already possessed a number of vacancies, but these have increased in Q1 of 2023/24 as a number of staff have been seconded onto the transformation programme which is operating from capital streams rather than revenue.

As a result of above employee costs for the year are expected to be below the approved budget by £0.229m. This is inclusive of increased employee costs from the proposed 2023/24 pay deal. School SLA charges for the

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

Capital Projects as at 30 June 2023



	Annual Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Expenditure				
Transformation Programme	5,000	1,250	754	4,246
Total Capital	5,000	1,250	754	4,246

Comments on the above figures

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

Chief Executive's Delivery Unit

Progress Against Agreed Savings

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
PPPE1	Apprenticeships	198	Reduce the budget which provides for apprenticeship salaries by 50%. More apprenticeships will therefore be attached to vacant posts which are already budgeted for. This may particularly help to fill vacancies in areas where recruitment is difficult.	99	0	0		Reflected within the 2022/23 budget.
PPPE4	Organisational Development & Performance	383	Explore whether Organisational Development / Learning and Development activities could be rationalised and restructured to reduce cost, given there is currently a vacant post within the team.	65	0	0		Restructures to the team are currently being considered to help develop and change the way Organisational Development/Learning is carried out.
Total PPPE Department				164	0	0		

ICT & ADMINISTRATION

Revenue Budget as at 30 June 2023

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employee Expenditure	8,110	2,000	1,989	11	(361)
Supplies & Services Expenditure	1,012	254	220	34	65
Capital Finance	78	19	0	19	19
Computer Repairs & Software	1,318	1,122	1,148	(26)	(26)
Communication Costs	13	13	31	(18)	(18)
Premises Expenditure (HDL)	6	0	0	0	1
Transport Expenditure	3	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	15	0	0	0	0
Premises Expenditure	170	75	90	(15)	(15)
Total Expenditure	10,725	3,483	3,478	5	(335)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-906	-20	-20	0	181
Schools SLA Income	-610	-432	-442	10	(45)
Total Income	-1,516	-452	-462	10	136
Net Operational Expenditure	9,209	3,031	3,016	15	(199)
Recharges					
Premises Support	557	139	139	0	0
Transport	16	4	4	0	0
Central Support	1,787	449	449	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-10,951	-2,738	-2,738	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-7,097	-2,146	-2,146	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,112	885	870	15	(199)

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of June 2023 the department is reporting a small net underspend against budget. Although over the longer term through to the end of the financial year it is expected net spend for the department will exceed the approved budget by £0.199m.

Employee costs for the year are expected to exceed the budget position by approximately £0.360m. This is based on increased employee costs from the proposed 2023/24 pay deal plus staff turnover saving targets not currently being achieved. This position will be closely monitored throughout the year and updates provided in future quarterly reports.

The over achievement of income against Fees and Charges relates to external client income for traded services. This is for Agresso implementation and support at partner sites. With a number of agency staff across the Council, the department is recharging licence costs for non HBC staff to their respective departments, this should help budget holders more readily see the impact agency staff are having on Council's finances as there is not just the direct fees to be considered, there is strain on a number of other services and existing contracts which do come at additional costs.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

Capital Projects as at 30 June 2023

	Annual Capital Allocation	Allocation to Date	Actual Spend	Total Allocation Remaining
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure				
ICT Rolling Capital Project	700	175	49	651
Total Capital	700	175	49	651

Comments on the above figures

The ICT and Admin Department sees a rolling budget of £700k for its capital needs each year. Moving forward into 2023/24 there is a proposal to move to a contract which includes new laptops for all officers as well as insurance for all devices.

ICT AND SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

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

LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Revenue Budget as at 30 June 2023

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	1,681	470	442	28	32
Agency Costs (Locums)	0	0	186	(186)	(450)
Supplies & Services	171	128	132	(4)	(4)
Civic Catering & Functions	26	2	1	1	4
Legal Expenses	260	20	76	(56)	(144)
Transport Related Expenditure	11	3	0	3	11
Total Expenditure	2,149	623	837	(214)	(551)
Income					
Land Charges	-90	-10	-10	0	0
School SLA's	-92	-65	-65	0	(1)
Licence Income	-284	-50	-54	4	10
Government Grant	-42	-42	-42	0	0
Fees & Charges Income	-70	-22	-24	2	6
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-177	177	437
Total Income	-578	-189	-372	183	452
Net Operational Expenditure	1,571	434	465	(31)	(99)
Recharges					
Premises Support	58	14	14	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	282	71	71	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	340	85	85	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,911	519	550	(31)	(99)

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of June 2023 the department is reporting a small net overspend against budget. It is currently forecast that net spend for the department will be over the approved budget by approximately £0.099m at the end of the financial year.

Employee costs for the year are expected to marginally be below the approved budget. This is a result of the number of vacancies that exist within the department but mitigated by agency costs and the proposed pay deal for 2023/24.

The main area of concern for the department is the volume of agency costs resulting from hard to fill vacant posts. It is expected these costs will be in the region of £0.450m at the end of the financial year. Whilst it has been agreed that these costs will be funded from reserves it is important that work is done now to reduce reliance on agency usage.

Within the forecast £0.144m overspend against budget of legal expenses, there is an estimated £0.218m costs relating to the contracting of barristers, most of which again, are due to the limited number of staff available to clear an increasing caseload. The impact of the transformation and recovery work in Children Services, along with increased support from the recruitment team and graduate rolls, should help alleviate the pressure seen in this area. However, the impact will likely not be seen immediately.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

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

Community and Greenspace

Revenue Budget as at 30 June 2023

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,061	3,700	3,667	33	(50)
Premises	3,685	1,017	1,033	(16)	(63)
Supplies & Services	1,598	553	526	27	108
Hired & Contracted Services	527	128	151	(23)	(93)
Book Fund	140	62	62	0	0
Food Provisions	371	54	87	(33)	(72)
School Meals Food	1,965	526	500	26	50
Miscellaneous Transport Costs	117	35	38	(3)	(8)
Other Agency Costs	601	159	140	19	16
Waste Disposal Contracts	6,865	1,810	1,804	6	34
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	67	38	38	0	8
Grant to Norton Priory	172	87	87	0	0
Capital Financing	201	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	33,370	8,169	8,133	36	(70)
Income					
Sales Income	-3,974	-922	-795	(127)	(308)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,741	-1,800	-1,800	0	0
Rental Income	-221	-72	-73	1	5
Government Grant Income	-595	-595	-595	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-685	-389	-389	(0)	0
SLA Income	-2,391	-627	-543	(85)	(286)
Internal Fees Income	-592	-83	-72	(11)	(52)
Capital Salaries	-173	-25	-26	0	(9)
Transfers From Reserves	0	71	71	0	0
Total Income	-14,373	-4,442	-4,221	(221)	(650)
Net Operational Expenditure	18,997	3,727	3,912	(185)	(720)
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,825	456	456	0	0
Transport	2,046	512	517	(5)	(20)
Central Support	3,856	966	966	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-540	-140	-140	0	0
Net Total Recharges	7,386	1,794	1,799	(5)	(20)
Net Departmental Expenditure	26,383	5,521	5,711	(190)	(740)

Comments on the above figures

Financial Position

The net department spend is £0.190m over budget at the end of Quarter 1 and the estimated outturn overspend against budget for 2023/24 is £0.740m.

Net employee spend is estimated to be slightly over the approved budget at the end of the financial year. The forecast outturn includes the pay increase proposal of £1,925 for all grades with the exception of a 3.5% increase for DM and above scales.

Whilst the proposed pay deal is over what had been included within the budget this is mitigated by a number of vacancies within leisure services and reduced casual usage in line with 2022/23 actual data.

Premises costs for cemeteries is overspent as contractors have been used for grass cutting services due to staff absences. Frank Myler Pavillion water meter charges is significantly higher than budget. Stadium premises electricity estimated outturn is based on previous years spend and will be reviewed during the course of the year.

Food Provisions is overspent due to the increasing inflationary food costs from suppliers. School Meals food underspend is reflected in the underachievement of sales income.

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

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

School Meals SLA income is forecast to underachieve by £0.286m over the course of the year but this will be mitigated by reduced staffing costs.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

Capital Projects as at 30 June 2023

Project Title	2023/24 Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Stadium Minor Works	34	2	0	34
Brookvale Pitch Refurbishment	28	1	13	15
Halton Leisure Centre	15,056	5,096	6,882	8,174
Open Spaces Schemes	851	82	45	806
Children's Playground Equipment	105	10	6	99
Upton Improvements	13	0	0	13
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12	0	1	11
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340	26	0	340
Runcorn Town Park	284	79	91	193
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,023	241	4	1,019
Pickerings Pasture Café	520	125	0	520
Litter Bins	20	1	0	20
Totals	18,286	5,663	7,042	11,244

Comments on the above figures

Stadium Minor Works

Previous year carry forward to buy stage and canopy.

Brookvale Pitch Refurbishment

There are some small works required in July. This project should then be completed.

Halton (Moor Lane) Leisure Centre

The project is making good progress and remains on track. The contract sum agreed with Wates is £28,997.616 and the estimated final account is currently the same value. There have been additional costs associated with the CPO. The total capital scheme is circa £31 million.

Open Spaces

This covers spending on a variety of externally funded projects, including Runcorn Hill, Ski slope & miniature railway improvements, Runcorn Cemetery improvements, Space Tree, Arley Woodland Park, Upton Rocks access works, The Big Halton Forest.

Children's Playground Equipment

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

Upton Improvements

Open space improvement works undertaken. Work has been delayed due to contractor workload and difficulty obtaining materials. No revised date set yet for when this may be spent.

Crow Wood Park

The main contract for the new park building has ended. A small amount of work to the building is required plus additional landscape contract to complete the paths - this is ongoing with some work from Property services and Open Spaces team to complete.

Landfill Tax Credits Schemes

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

Runcorn Town Park

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

Wigg/Spike Island Recovery Works

The programme is slightly behind due to staff capacity issues. Waiting for a consultancy agreement to be put in place so the scheme can progress using external help.



Pickerings Pasture Café

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

COMMUNITY & GREENSPACE DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
COMM 1	The Brindley Theatre	64	Reduce Box Office opening hours from 10am-5pm Monday-Friday to 10am-2pm. Currently 80% of tickets are purchased online or by telephone and this is increasing each year.	10	0	0		Box Office core opening hours were reduced to 5 hours (Mon – Fri) 10am – 3pm. They will be realigned to 4 hours daily 11am – 3.00pm (Mon – Fri) from 1 September onwards. No LED lighting has yet been installed but is planned for later in the financial year.
			Replace all non-LED lighting in the building. This is estimated to reduce on-stage energy costs by 75%.	10	0	0		
COMM 3	Sport & Recreation	471	Restructuring the roles and responsibilities of the Sports Development Team	0	36	0		On track to meet savings identified for 2024/25.
COMM 4	Stadium & Catering Services	751	Franchise the concourse only catering services to an external operator.	50	0	0		
			An organisational restructure is currently being implemented for Stadium & Catering Services to reflect recent service changes.	40	0	0		

COMM 6	Area Forums	170	Reduce the base budget provision to £50k temporarily for one year, with all unspent monies in 2022/23 (currently £120k) being carried forward to be spent by the relevant Area Forums in 2023/24. The base budget position will then be reviewed for 2024/25.	120	-120	0		Implemented in 2023/24 budget setting.
COMM 5	Stadium & Catering Services – School Meals	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over £200,000 for a number of years and is forecast to make a similar loss by year-end. Work would be undertaken with schools over the next two years to support them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.	0	0	12		Work underway in school meals being delivered through alternative means
Total Community & Environment Department				230	-84	12		

ECONOMY ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

Revenue Operational Budget at 30th June 2023

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,155	1,319	1,309	10	39
Repairs & Maintenance	1,930	587	589	(2)	(2)
Premises	104	91	91	0	(3)
Energy & Water Costs	1,765	302	247	55	222
NNDR	793	683	676	7	7
Rents	165	77	77	0	0
Economic Regeneration Activities	37	3	3	0	0
Security	509	77	86	(9)	(30)
Supplies & Services	297	128	139	(11)	(45)
Supplies & Services - Grant	535	110	110	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	85	25	25	0	0
Total Expenditure	11,375	3,402	3,352	50	188
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-803	-72	-62	(10)	(41)
Rent - Commercial Properties	-974	-186	-146	(40)	(158)
Rent - Investment Properties	-44	-13	-11	(2)	(6)
Rent - Markets	-853	-211	-191	(20)	(78)
Government Grant	-1,058	-130	-130	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-1,084	0	-4	4	6
Schools SLA Income	-294	-205	-169	(36)	(36)
Recharges to Capital	-232	-15	-15	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-375	-217	-217	0	0
Total Income	-5,717	-1,049	-945	(104)	(313)
Net Operational Expenditure	5,658	2,353	2,407	(54)	(125)
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,006	502	502	0	0
Transport	23	6	6	0	0
Central Support	1,710	428	428	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-7,728	-1,932	-1,932	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,985	-996	-996	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,673	1,357	1,411	(54)	(125)

Comments on the above figures

Economy, Enterprise & Property is forecast to be £0.125m over budget at the end of the financial year with a current figure of net spend being £0.054m over budget for the first quarter of the year.

Due to the energy costs budget increasing significantly in 2023/24, the department is forecasting that it will be £0.264m under budget in year, but this is still predicted to be £0.484m higher than 2022/23, which is an increase of over 50%. The forecast will change over the following three quarters depending on the change in energy costs and usage over this time.

There has continued to be delays in recruiting across the department, and so the projection is currently that the department will be under budget by £0.039m on employee costs. It is important to note that the pay award has not yet been agreed for 2023/24 and this could drastically change employee costs if awards are agreed higher than those budgeted for.

As inflation is running much higher than originally predicted at the time of budget setting, supplies and services and security are predicted to overspend by £0.030m and £0.045m respectively. These budgets will be monitored closely throughout the financial year.

As in previous years, and the long recovery from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the financial challenges of commercial property rent continue to present a significant financial challenge. The department is currently predicting to under achieve it's income target by £0.158m. This position takes into account an approved saving of £0.120m letting out vacant space at Rutland House not being achieved.

The department is also projecting to under achieve on market rental income targets this financial year, as the occupancy rate continues to be low, this may be due to continued impact of introduction of customers having to pay for parking outside the market but hopefully footfall will increase before year end.

Early predictions also suggest budget shortfalls in fees and charges income and School SLA Income. Financial Management continue to work closely with the Department and remain focused on achieving a balanced budget at year end, increasing income and decreasing spend where possible. This will continue to be closely monitored as the year progresses and updates will be provided accordingly.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

ECONOMY ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

Capital Projects as of 30 June 23

	2023/24 Capital Allocation	Allocation to Date	Actual Spend to 30 June 2023	Total Allocation Remaining
Expenditure				
3MG	138	12	12	126
Murdishaw	29	0	0	29
Equality Act Improvement Works	352	56	56	296
Solar Farm Extension	8	0	0	8
Foundry Lane Residential Area	2634	77	77	2557
Kingsway Learning Centre Improved Facilities	35	0	0	35
Roof Top Garden	35	0	0	35
Property Improvements	224	16	16	208
Runcorn Station Building Development	514	30	30	484
Waterloo Building	93	0	0	93
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	17	0	0	17
Town Deal				
- Unlock Runcorn	176	10	10	166
- Brindley Theatre Enhancement	359	42	42	317
- Creative & Digital Skills Facility	845	69	69	776
- Town Centre New Homes - Rutland Street	282	0	0	282
- Health & Education Hub	44	12	12	32
- High Street Connectivity	201	6	6	195
- Enterprise Hub	62	0	0	62
- Programme Management	200	0	0	200
Total Capital	6,248	330	330	5,918

3MG – HBC Field was sold in April 2023 for £11.9m. There are a small number of remaining plots that will form a portfolio of sites to be disposed of in 2023 / 2024.

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

Equality Act Budget- There are a number of access type schemes using the equality act budget this year.

Solar Farm Extension - It has now been operational for 2 years. No key issues have been identified. The system is performing in line with expectations in terms of energy produced and income.

Foundry Lane – Project progressing on schedule with all ground remediation works now complete. Due to pre grant expenditure and additional costs for the land swap with Beesley & Fildes, it was agreed by Executive Board that the programme will be increased by £1.7m for 2023/24.

Kingsway Learning Centre Improvement Works – Majority of the refurbishment works completed; redecoration works to the meeting rooms to be carried out.

Property Improvements- There are a number of projects against this code including Reroofing the Fitness suite at the Stadium, lift replacement at Kingsway Learning Centre, and reroofing 73 High Street.

Runcorn Station Building Development –PACE ES3has now been completed, following an options selection process and have agreed on a preferred option. Within Network Rail the project has been moved to the Capital Delivery Team, where a client remit document has been produced and being reviewed and agreed by partners, to prepare for a procurement exercise for a Stage 4 supplier to develop the single option and obtain an Approval in Principal.



Waterloo Building - Awaiting decision from Planning in respect of demolition, subject to approval being granted demolition will follow after a tender exercise.



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

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

ECONOMY, ENTERPRISE AND PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A




Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
EEP1	Capital Works Team	N/A	Increase the level of fee income by increasing the percentage charged or charging by time, including those works not currently charged for.	10	0	0		On target.
EEP4	Cleaning Services – Council Buildings	580	Review cleaning arrangements, with a focus on only emptying bins and cleaning toilets daily.	0	100	0		Until the accommodation review is complete, only limited savings will be made in 2024/25

EEP2	Caretaking & Security Services	641	<p>A review and restructuring of caretaking arrangements.</p> <p>Reduce security cover at Halton Lea to provide opening/closing and then static guarding 7.00am to 7.30pm Monday to Friday, and 9.30am to 3.00pm on Saturdays to cover the opening hours of Halton Direct Link.</p>	0	52	0	 	<p>Restructure will take place in 24/25. It is anticipated the full saving will not be met in year.</p> <p>Cannot achieve savings for security due to anti-social behaviour in Halton Lea. Police have advised security is kept on site until this is resolved.</p>
EEP5	Corporate Buildings	927	Generate additional rental income by providing additional office space for external organisations at Rutland House, by letting out the remaining three floors.	120	0	0		Reflected in 2023/24 budget.
EEP6	Facilities Management	165	Restructure the team in light of an expression of interest for retirement.	44	0	0		Reflected in 2023/24 budget.
EEP8	Technical Support & Market Team	392	Restructuring of the team	98	0	0		Reflected in 2023/24 budget.
Total Economy, Enterprise & Property Department				307	152	0		




8.0 Application of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress Symbols

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