

Corporate Policy and Performance Board– Priority Based Monitoring Report Q2

Reporting Period: 01st July to 30th Sept 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 second 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 September 2023 processing times for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction were as follows: new claims 24.97 days and changes in circumstances 20.05 days.

Department for Works and Pensions - Data Share Memorandum of Understanding

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) share claimant data with the Council's Benefit Service relating to new claims for DWP benefits and changes in circumstances. This helps the Council administer housing benefit and council tax reduction claims, and the DWP passes this information to the Council on a daily basis. As part of the of data sharing process the Council have to sign an annual Memorandum of Understanding with the DWP to confirm that it is complying with a number of safeguards relating to the security and integrity of information that the DWP transfers to the Council. Currently the DWP is undertaking an audit of all local authorities in England and Wales with regards to the terms and conditions of the data share memorandum of understanding, and Halton is providing evidence demonstrating that it is adhering to the requirements of the memorandum of understanding.

Universal Credit Implementation

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) statistics indicate at 10th August 2023 there were 16,138 people within Halton claiming Universal Credit. The table below shows the Universal Credit caseload in Halton on a quarterly basis over the past 17 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
8 th June 2023	16,057
13 th July 2023	16,072
10 th August 2023	16,138

2.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

Supplier Invoice Processing Performance

At the end of Quarter 2, 91.32% of all supplier invoices paid in 2023/24 had been settled within 30 days. This represents an improvement on 2022/23 performance despite the Purchase to Pay Team continuing to operate at reduced capacity since the start of the year.

Insurance tender

The Council is to retender a range of insurance policies which are due to expire on 31 March 2024. All available contract extensions have been taken up on the Council's combined liability, medical malpractice, and engineering policies. The Council therefore has no option but to go out to tender for these policies. The motor vehicle, property and computer policies are at the end of their initial three-year contract terms. Extension options are available. However, the Council's insurance broker, has advised that the Council may achieve a better overall outcome if all the Council's main policies are retendered at the same time. This can be more attractive to insurers as it spreads out their risk if they hold all the Council's policies.

The Council's Procurement Team and insurance broker will support the tender process, which will be conducted in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015. A competitive tender exercise will be undertaken using a Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation framework. This framework is widely used by local authorities for insurance services. The Council's broker has advised that it is a difficult market at present for various reasons (inflation, increasing loss costs, global tensions, slow supply chain recovery), and are therefore advising that the Council budgets prudently for an increase in premium of between 5% and 10% on 2023/24 premiums. The outcome of the tender exercise is likely to be known towards the end of February 2024.

Adult Social Care – Financial Assessments

Work is continuing to provide adult social care service clients with the facility to complete their financial assessment applications via a secure online portal. The system is easy to use and includes a range of animations to explain to the individual why certain questions are being asked. Providing this reasoning, especially around some of the financial questions, helps to take away the worry many service users currently experience when being asked to share personal information. The portal will give an instant indication to the user about how much they would need pay towards a care package. Providing this upfront estimate allows the service user to make a much more informed decision when considering their care options. Assistance with completing the online form will be given to anyone that requires it.

The system is currently in the final stages of testing. It is anticipated that a phased roll out of the system will commence in the next couple of months. The following link will be provided on the Council's website for clients to access prior to the new system live. It provides a short

video explaining how the financial assessment process will work [Online financial assessment process](#).

2.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

2023/24 Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring

For the financial year to 30 June 2023, overall Council operational net spending was £29.4m against a budget of £27.2m, resulting in an overspend position to date against budget of £2.2m. The forecast position for the year to 31 March 2024 was an estimated overspend of £8.4m.

Capital spending at 30 June 2023 totalled £9.6m, which is 90% of the planned spending of £10.7m at this stage. This represents 17% of the total Capital Programme of £56.2m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years).

The updated financial forecast and picture of net spending to 30 September 2023 will be reported to Executive Board on 16 November 2023.

2022/23 Statement of Accounts

The draft version of the 2022/23 Statement was published on the Council's website on Wednesday 04 July 2023. The Council's external auditor Grant Thornton UK LLP has commenced the audit of the accounts, the aim being to finalise the audit by the end of December and report the Audit Findings Report to the Audit & Governance Board on 20 March 2024.

Council Tax and Business Rate Collection

Council tax collection for the first half of the year is 53.9%, down 0.52% on this point last year. Cash collection for the year to date is £42.4m, this includes £1.3m collected in relation to previous year debt.

Business rates collection for the first half of the year is 56.4%, down by 5.2% on this point last year. Cash collected for the year to date is £34.1m, this includes £0.7m collected in relation to previous year debt.

2.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

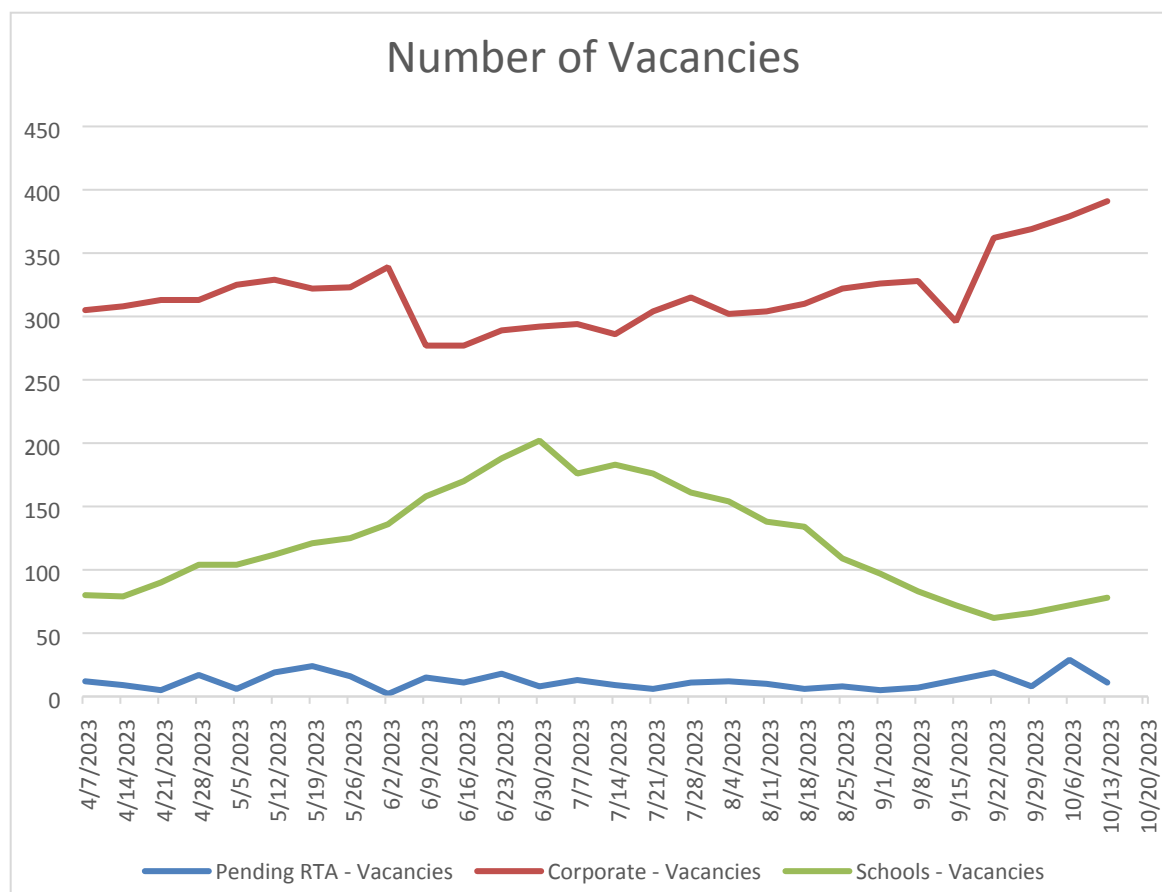
Three services within the HR Operations Division (Resourcing & Recruitment, Payroll & Pensions and Employment Relations) remain under significant pressure in the current year. Additional demand persists across all areas. The new service configuration of HR Operations (Resourcing & Recruitment, Payroll & Pensions and Employment Relations, Health and Safety) is working collaboratively to deliver what is now required by the wider Council. This is informed by work within the Transformation programme together with business as usual.

The Employment Relations Team has been restructured to implement a HR Business Partnering Model that will be effective towards the end of Quarter 3, with recruitment to a remaining vacant post taking place.

Despite significant challenges in terms of volume, the service has delivered positive results across the recruitment and initial pay administration of a large number of new recruits across Halton schools in time for the start of the new academic year as well as successfully managing to avoid impact on corporate recruitment during the busy school recruitment period.

The Division has supported the Children’s Directorate to recruit to the vacancies of Executive Director Children’s (DCS) and Operational Director Children’s Social Care. Furthermore the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration and Operational Director Economy, Enterprise & Property required senior recruitment processes to run and complete. Three successful appointments were secured and delivered collaboratively with North West Employers with one taking place solely in house.

Recruitment demand remains consistently high. With the school recruitment push at an end, we are seeing a significant upswing in demand for the processing of corporate vacancies, as can be seen in the graph below:



At the time of writing, there are 391 Council vacancies in the recruitment workflow inclusive of usual recruitment, ‘Adults Always On’ recruitment, and an ‘Indeed’ campaign. In addition, there are 78 school vacancies in progress.

Tough labour market conditions continue to bring challenges in the resourcing of many service areas across the organisation. To continue to address the consistent issue, resourcing workflows remain continuously under review. A trial was carried on of an ‘indeed’ campaign to work on quick turnaround recruitment adapting to the labour market which is currently progressing 51 vacancies with 5 in pre-checks currently taking place.

The Communications and Marketing service continues to support a range of organisational initiatives, including the Reimagine Halton Transformation Programme, with a current focus on staff engagement through a series of ‘Chats about Change’; also continuing support for projects within the programme, including the current recruitment drive to posts within Children’s Services and upcoming recruitment to support Accelerated Growth. Elsewhere, following a successful launch of the first Family Hubs in Widnes, the service is actively supporting the launch of the Runcorn Family Hub, while developing plans to progress the roll out of the family hub model across the borough. Interviews for the vacant Communications

Officer post will take place on 19 October, which, subject to appointment, will increase capacity within the team.

2.6 ICT and Administration

The key development of note this quarter has been the **disaggregation of the central administrative service**.

As noted within the emerging issues with the Q1 report the considerable project of the disaggregation of the Shared Administrative Support Service was initiated with the objective of moving all staff out of the centre to then be placed within individual teams and services. This disaggregation removes the central control of all staffing within the service and releases the management responsibility back into the directorates.

The proposed 'to be' operating model now will allow services to be 'responsible for their own administration processes.

It was proposed to transfer the management of existing administration team members directly to the managers of the service areas they currently support.

To make savings identified within the analysis of the current operating model, a number of managerial roles have now been disestablished, these managerial responsibilities will pass to service managers.

The majority of administration staff will stay within their existing substantive post reporting to their existing administration line manager (currently HBC4 senior administration officer).

The objective of the approach taken by the project team within the service was that of minimal disruption of the day-to-day tasks currently undertaken by administration staff, administration staff currently receive daily task requests from service personnel, and this will continue.

As noted service managers will now be responsible for their own administration resource and will be able to manage that resource in their own way according to the current and future requirements of their service.

Each Executive Director within the newly developed executive officer structure will receive full time support from a dedicated Personal Assistant, the current executive level support structure contains limited FTE equivalent posts arising from historic agreements with previous post holders, this structure is no longer fit for purpose and was subject to a previously agreed management team report and has now taken place.

Service managers will be responsible for directing and monitoring the work of their own administration resource.

Service managers will be responsible for recruiting and training their own administration staff.

Arranging sickness and holiday absence cover for administration staff will be the responsibility of service managers.

All sickness, welfare, disciplinary, time recording, mileage claim, expense claim and staff induction processes relating to administration staff will be the responsibility of service managers.

Improvements to administrative processes to increase efficiency will be the responsibility of service managers to identify, develop and deploy.

The table below defines the dates of transfer and subsequent removal of the association between the central service and the directorates associated.

Team	Target Transfer Date	Trajectory
Children's Centre Reception staff	01/10/2023	Transfer completed
Education	01/10/2023	Transfer completed
CICCL/AFS	01/10/2023	Transfer completed
Adult Social Care	01/11/2023	Transfer date agreed
iCART	01/11/2023	Transfer date agreed
Children's Safeguarding	01/11/2023	Transfer date agreed
CIN	01/11/2023	Transfer planning in progress
RTH and Municipal Reception staff	01/12/2023	Transfer planning in progress
Ground Floor Municipal	01/12/2023	Transfer planning in progress
Central Admin	01/12/2023	Transfer planning in progress
Stadium	01/12/2023	Transfer date agreed

This has been a considerable undertaking carried out by the service to smoothly initiate and control this level of change for a service that has successfully saved the authority millions of pounds in reduced spend over the period of its delivery tenure, the efforts of the teams and associated management should be noted.

The Customer Journey: A newly initiated transformation programme aimed at defining and improving the associated customer experience for both internal as well as external users of council services. The programme will have the primary objective of improving the initial contact and service delivery options open to residents inclusive of Face to Face, Telephone and Digital means. This also should be focused upon challenging, improving and developing upon internal process and the delivery of services administratively and well as through qualified expert service.

2.7 Legal and Democracy

In July, the Council received notification from the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) of its intention to carry out an inspection of our arrangements for ensuring compliance with the Regulations of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA). IPCO submitted a series of questions which were answered in detail by Legal Services. The response proved satisfactory to IPCO, who were content with the Council's arrangements. A revised RIPA policy, which was already being worked on, was submitted to and approved by Executive Board in September. Recruitment of a new Taxi Licensing Enforcement Officer was successfully carried out in Quarter 2, and the postholder is already proving to be a valued member of the team. An appointment has been made to one of the 2 vacant Child Care Solicitors posts, and the successful candidate will be joining the team shortly.

2.8 Catering - School Meals

As a result of schools being notified that from the 31 March 2025 Halton will no longer be providing a catering provision, we have seen a number of schools make enquiries regarding TUPE transfer to alternative catering providers. Two schools will be leaving Halton Catering service from November 2023.

Two alternative providers presented their offering directly to schools at two separate open days hosted at the Stadium.

2.9 Stadium

The stadium management team continue to engage with the Transformation team in reimagining the Stadium, its commercial viability and sustainability.

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 initial data received on the customer satisfaction surveys reads as follows.

- 89% of returns rated the stadium in terms of 'Quality of Venue' between 4 and 5 stars.
- 93% of returns rated the stadium in terms of 'Quality of Catering' between 4 and 5 stars.
- 89% of returns said they would likely or very likely use the stadium again.
- 84% of customers would likely or very likely recommend the stadium to others.

(1 star being very poor and 5 stars being excellent)

Overall, 79% of customers rated the stadium very good or excellent.

The recently purchased event stage, canopy, sound & lighting system was utilised for the inaugural newly branded 'Live & Direct' events.

The test event saw 4 local artists perform in front of a packed crowd receiving praise from all the artists involved along with a positive news story from the international All Music Magazine - *"a perfect start to this new venue here at Halton Stadium", "and it has a feel very similar to a smaller O2 Academy venue."*

Following the success of this event we are in the process of developing a programme of live music and entertainment events, utilising links with existing stakeholders, whilst also pursuing new relationships with promoters and artists.

2.10 Registration Services

The Registration Service is working with HBC ITC Service's, HBC Income and Stopford (an external Registration Management System provider) - to technically develop and allow online appointments for Births, Deaths, Marriage and Civil Partnerships. This use of automation in improving the customers journey is aligned with the "Reimagining Halton" transformation agenda. The Registration Service currently has a fulltime vacancy for a Senior Registration Officer, which is being advertised for a second time due to there being no suitable applicants so far.

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, which opens on October 10th.

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, which opens on October 10th.

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 now installed the steelwork is erected, the ground works to the pool hall is being carried out and the roof sheeting is being installed. Works are on programme, contractual completion date is 3rd February 2025.

Camden Buildings, High Street- refurb to create digital/creative hub (57-59)

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022, the design has now progressed to RIBA stage 4, and the project is now out to tender, with a return date of October 22nd. It is anticipated that a start on site will be made in the New Year. An initial soft strip together with some enabling works has now been completed this being required ahead of the main works starting on site.

Camden Buildings, High Street- refurb to create digital/creative hub (63-65)

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022, the design has now progressed to RIBA stage 3, and we are looking to move to stage 4 in due course. 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

A feasibility study has been received ; Consideration in respect of the most appropriate course of action is currently being considered by 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 obtained in April to proceed with the project. Works are now being progressed in respect of preparing the planning application, which will be submitted in due course.

Cavendish School - 2 class extension

Works are on site and progressing well, anticipated completion is February 2024.

The Brindley- Proposed extension

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022, following which design development has now progressed through RIBA stage 4. The preferred option has been agreed with a budget cost estimate of £5.6m. Planning approval has been obtained. Works are now progressing with preparing the tender documentation, project to be tendered via the Chest in due course, anticipated start on site is late January.

Runcorn Library redevelopment

Design development works ongoing to create an NHS Health & Education hub. RIBA stage is now complete and we are now preparing to proceed with the design to RIBA stage 4, the budget cost is £1.8m.

Elite House- Redevelopment

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022. We are currently working on securing an operator who will feed in to the design process in due course. The Town Deal funding is insufficient to carry out the desired scheme, as such there is a bid in to the combined Authority for additional funding, this can only be progressed however once an

operator is in place and the design developed. The RIBA stage 2 report has been issued, once an operator is in place the design will move to RIBA stage 3.

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, the work is currently on site with an estimated completion towards the end of October. 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 the works have recently started on site with a completion due in early November.

Unit 10 Refurbishment

Works are complete other than the gas main by Cadent, though this has not affected handover of the internal work which is now complete. and Tarmac have now taken occupation following their own fit out work their own fit out.

Decarbonisation Projects

Funding bids are to be submitted in early October for decarbonisations works at both St Pat's and St Luke's care homes as previously mentioned, together with schemes at Runcorn Town Hall, Kingsway Learning Centre and Picow Farm depot, all with the intension of electrifying the heat and hot water provision and moving away from gas.

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. The majority of the projects are now complete with only 3 projects outstanding, all of which will be completed by year end.

Corporate Maintenance programme 2023/24

The 2023/24 Corporate maintenance programme has been approved by the Asset Management Working Group. Circa 20 projects on the list, some now complete others at various stages of progress, the intension being all funding will be expended by year end.

Education SEMH Resource base projects

There are 6 schools where we are upgrading the facilities to create Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) resource bases for both KS1 & KS2 groups. 3 of the projects are now complete, at Oakfield, Victoria Road and Westfield Primaries, the 3 others at Astmoor, Ditton Nursey and Woodside are all to be complete by year-end.

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

Department for Works and Pensions – real time information

Every month the Council’s Benefit Service has to produce a file of its housing benefit caseload, which includes the claimant’s name and address, whether it is a new claim, or there has been a change of circumstance, or there has been no change, and then send it to the DWP. This information allows the DWP to measure a local authority’s performance in terms of how quickly (in days) it processes new claims and changes in circumstances. Over the last 6 months the DWP has been engaging with the software suppliers who provide council’s with their benefit systems and tasked them with making modifications to their systems to enable real time information to be supplied from the local authority benefit system to the DWP. From November 2023 the process of local authority’s providing real time housing benefit information to the DWP is going live nationally, and this will provide the DWP with up to date claimant information.

3.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

Transforming Public Procurement Bill

The Procurement Bill, which will reform the existing public sector procurement rules, is continuing to progress through Parliament. Once it has completed its passage and received Royal Assent, which should be within the next few weeks, there will then need to be secondary legislation (regulations) to bring some elements of the Bill and the wider regime into effect. Affected bodies, such as the Council, will be given a minimum of six months’ notice before ‘go-live’, which is currently anticipated to be in October 2024. Existing procurement legislation will apply until the new regime goes live and will also continue to apply to procurements started under the old rules. Guidance will be provided to practitioners to cover the transition from the old to the new regulations, and a comprehensive programme of learning and development will be available to support professionals to implement the changes.

As previously reported, 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 continue to be governed by the Council’s Procurement Standing Orders.

3.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

Enforcement Agent Fees

The Ministry of Justice have completed a review of the fees that can be recovered from debtors by enforcement agents (EAs) when using the procedures under the Taking Control of Goods Regulations 2013 and the Taking Control of Goods (Fees) Regulations 2014. The fees were introduced in 2014 by the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007.

Proposed uplift to the fees recoverable (subject to legislation being passed) under Regulation 4 of the Taking Control of Goods (Fees) Regulations 2014 Enforcement other than under a High Court Writ are as per the table below.

FEE STAGE	CURRENT FIXED FEE	5% UPLIFT
COMPLIANCE STAGE	£75	£79
ENFORCEMENT STAGE	£235	£247
SALE OR DISPOSAL STAGE	£110	£116

3.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

The 2023/24 pay award remains unresolved. The Unison industrial action ballot has 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 until the 2024 calendar year. It should be noted that the level of pay increase although potentially matched with last year will put extreme pressure on the Council budget.

Use of agency workers continues to remain consistently high in the Council, particularly in Adults and Children's Services where labour market conditions remain extremely tight. This also relates to a consistently high number of vacancies in the staffing establishment (see recruitment update in Key Developments above). 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, the 'indeed' campaign mentioned above being one stream of that work. Additionally there has been an Agency Contract Manager post created in HR Operations to support managers to reduce their agency usage where possible.

3.6 ICT

The previous report discussed the development of the **Microsoft Cloud journey** for the authority and the development of new ways of working through the use of new technologies and what is about to be a step change in the way IT or the Cloud Technology stack is delivered into and through the authority.

We talk about Office 365 and again as users we are focused upon the laptop's or the tablets, we use on a daily basis which is perfectly understandable. But it must be understood that the technologies we are now moving forward with are considerably more than that.

The technology divisions and the wider services linked to the department have redesigned the way in which the authority's data will be managed, the way in which its digital security will be dealt with, the way in which we access technologies.

With further projects looking to reduce the scale of the data centre footprint and the way in which the considerable and complex network that secures our daily access will work to simplify and develop new ways of working into the future.

The elephant in the room currently is when will Office 365 be launched within the authority and when will the newly contracted Dell laptop devices be released. It is important to remember when undertaking such considerable change everything else that supports the device and the use of a small element of the Microsoft Product set involves.

Over the last 12 months the teams have had to individually move peoples SharePoint sites and deal with the complexities of how data is shared within the authority in order to upgrade these sites and personal document libraries to the SharePoint online systems and the One Drive personal libraries. Thousands of libraries and over 1000 individual libraries have already been moved, with many more to go.

Over 2300 applications reside within current systems and a colossal amount of work is being undertaken to reduce and define those systems that will take us forward and essentially will work within the new environments.

As we all understand digital security is an essential element to any online strategy and before any devices are released this must be as controlled as we can make it for the security and safety of our clients and staff.

Finally, Telephony Skype for business have served the authority cost effectively in many iterations for over 14 years, the authority fully owned this product set and has maintained a low-cost solution not only for internal and external calls but this has operated within our contact centre dealing with Hundreds of Thousands of call annually. Add to this the complexity of hundreds of dedicated response groups and emergency lines for Social Care and all other services linked to a number range of over 5'000. The swap over to teams is not something we can complete overnight.

The small team linked to this project has made considerable efforts in lining all of this complexity together with a large number of associated projects and daily service demand.

The department aims to release a small number of devices to officers across the authority from November the 6th, this trial period will last approximately 2 weeks. The devices will be brought back in, and feedback will be analysed.

It is proposed by the 23rd November a larger scale trial will be released across key teams across Adults, Children's, Economy and the Chief Executives Directorate to analyse the final build. If everything goes to plan, then the wider training and deployment plan will be initiated Early in the new year together with new self-service platforms and support solutions.

Project delivery updates will be detailed within ongoing monitoring reports.

3.7 Legal and Democracy

The considerable work pressures in the Childrens Social Care area are continuing. The legal team will shortly see a lot more work generated as a result of the Accelerated Growth Fund, and arrangements are in place for the recruitment of a temporary solicitor to deal with the demand.

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 is still a real concern. Staff turnover is at an all time high and motivating staff is becoming more difficult.

The school meals service will request from each school an expected catering transfer date to ensure we have resource capacity and avoid delays.

3.9 Stadium

Contractual Negotiations

- Everton FC (due to budget constraints – contract terminated)
- Widnes 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 in the season 2023 up to the 30/09/23.

- Actual Attendance Average 1721
- Declared Attendance Average 2625

The impact of the low attendances for 2023 include.

- 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 Registration Service is working with HBC ITC Service's, HBC Income and Stopford (an external Registration Management System provider) - to technically develop and allow online appointments for Births, Deaths, Marriage and Civil Partnerships. This use of automation in improving the customers journey is aligned with the "Reimagining Halton" transformation agenda. The Registration Service currently has a fulltime vacancy for a Senior Registration Officer, which is being advertised for a second time due to there being no suitable applicants so far.

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 Member working group has been set up to look at the various options available to us in respect of rationalising our accommodation. Work is now being carried out looking at the feasibility of various options, once complete recommendations will be put forward 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.

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. Two bids to the next round of the Public sector decarbonisation scheme will be submitted in early October, the first covering St Luke's and St Pat's care homes the second covering, Runcorn Town Hall, Kingsway Learning Centre and Picow Farm depot.

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 Council's latest annual progress report in relation to the achievement of its equality objectives is published on the Council website and is available via:

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

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 Q2	Supporting Commentary
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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 agreed by Council in February 2023.

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 Q2	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 16 November 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 Q2	Supporting Commentary
Publish the Statement of Accounts following external audit and the Annual		The draft accounts were published and shared with the External Auditor

Governance Statement by 30th September 2023.	on 04 July 2023. The audit of accounts commenced at the start of October and expected to be finalised at the end of December. Audit Findings Report is expected to be reported to Audit & Governance Board in March 2024.
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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 Q2	Supporting Commentary
Establish Treasury Management Policy and report to Council - March 2023.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Treasury Management Policy reported to Council on 08 March 2023
Provide monitoring reports to Executive Board on a bi-annual basis.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Treasury Management update to 30 September 2023 will be reported to Executive Board 16 November 2023.

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

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Establish and report prudential indicators to Council - March 2023.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Prudential indicators reported to Council on 08 March 2023.
Provide monitoring reports to the Executive Board on a bi-annual basis.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Position to 30 September 2023 will be reported to Executive Board 16 November 2023.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
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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%	53.9%			This is down by 0.52% on the same point last year
FS LI 04	The percentage of Business Rates which should have been received during the year that were received	96.18%	97.50%	56.4%			This is down 5.2% on the same point last year.
FS LI 05	Average time for processing new claims (Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction)	23.71	18	24.79			The Benefits Service is suffering unprecedented levels of staff sickness, in addition three members of staff have recently left. The Division is in the process of recruiting 3 Benefit Officers.
FS LI 06	Average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances	9.55	8	20.5			The Benefits Service is suffering unprecedented levels of staff sickness, in addition three members of staff have recently left. The Division is in the process of recruiting 3 Benefit Officers.
FSLI 07	Proportion of all supplier invoices paid within 30 days	91.13%	92.0%	91.32%			Invoice payment performance is up compared to 2022/23, although remains behind



	(including disputed invoices)						the target for the year. Performance during the rest of the year will be influenced by whether the team is fully resourced. At present it is carrying one vacancy and a recruitment process is about to commence.
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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 Q2	Supporting Commentary
Promote and take forward the delivery of actions identified within the Organisational Development Strategy September 2023		The strategy has been reviewed, tailored accordingly, and is now aligned with the Transformation Programme requirements
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.
Embed knowledge and skills gained from Senior Leadership and Management Development		This will be particularly targeted to supporting Transformation projects.


Programmes (MBA / MSc) December 2023.		
Reconfigure Leadership and Management development in the organisation to align with Transformation Programme principles December 2023.		Leadership & Management cohort established at Level 5, utilising the apprenticeship Levy to fund the qualification
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. However, due to reduction in resource it is unlikely to be achieved in 2023

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 Q2	Supporting Commentary
Establish 20 new apprentice placements within Council services, utilising existing vacancies, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.		There is currently no specific resource in position to help to achieve this target. Rectification is planned by resource being placed in the Organisational Development Service, however a model of funding needs to be secured first to enable this. This is currently being examined. There are currently 6 new hire apprentices in the Council, with the last one recruited in March 2023. Other initiatives are currently being explored within the Transformation Programme.
Establish 20 new existing employee apprenticeships to enable up-skilling in		4 conversions this quarter, taking total up to 6 in this current financial year.

a range of business areas, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.		
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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 Q2	Supporting Commentary
Review and consider most appropriate resourcing mix in collaboration with service management in areas of highest agency usage (Transformation Programme) December 2023.		Currently a key strand of Transformation Programme and dedicated resource created in HR Operations. 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 Q2	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. Detailed and specific campaigns running to meet requirements. Refer to Key Developments and Emerging Issues above for more information







Ref	Objective
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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)
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Milestone	Progress Q2	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 that are currently being recruited the Accelerating Growth project.
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	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXDU LI 01	Average FTE days lost to sickness	12.98 (Days)	9.5 (Days)	5.32 (Days)			Slightly better outturn than at Q2 of 2022/23 (5.96). Refer to narrative in Key Developments above around the implementation of HR Business Partnering to increase effectiveness in this area.




CXD U LI 02	Percentage of Employees without sickness	66.45	70.00	79.36			Higher than same period last year and better than outturn for whole of 2022/23. Also refer to comment against LI 01 above.
CXD U LI 03	Total Full Time Equivalent Staffing Establishment (Indicator for information only)	3,204	For information Only	3211	For information Only	For information Only	Reported for information purposes only.
CXD U LI 04	Total Staff (head count) (Indicator for information only)	4,127		4151			
CXD U LI 05	Total Agency Worker Usage (number of placements – year to date)	766	650	447			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 vacancies although reduced in comparison to last year is still more prevalent.
Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXD U LI 06	Total Agency Worker Cost (cumulative gross cost – year to date)	£8.34 m	£5.0m	4.69m			See LI 05 immediately above. <i>(Please note, the 22/23 actual has been updated to include 'off-contract' spend and has therefore</i>




							<i>increased from £8.5m previously reported)</i>
CXD U LI 10 9	The percentage of top 5% of earners that are: a) Women	61.45 %	55%	60.5%			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.
	b) From BME communities	2.7%	2.0%	2.74%			
	c) With a disability	0%	8.0%	0%			
CXD U LI 10 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%	1.74%			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 continues to be monitored.
CXD U LI 11	Minority Ethnic community staff as % of total workforce.	0.99%	1.00%	1.39%			Shows improvement fluctuation exists due to turnover and outturn tends to hover around target level.
Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXD U LI 12	Average time to recruit (Applicant Tracking System reported figure)	19 Days	12.2 Days	14.1 Days			Outturn demonstrates the number of days taken from vacancy

							<p>closing date to completion of recruitment. Improvement in this outturn is reflective of changes to processes and remove of some checks for recruitments where they are not required, rather than operating a universal approach as has been the case historically.</p>
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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 Q2	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 continues to be made in the delivery stages of Office 365 and Azure Cloud services. Many user data sets have been migrated and will continue through Q2/3 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.		As defined within the body of text, the project is now underway with considerable efforts being made to define and design both procedural and technical definitions and designs
The continued development of the Records Management Unit enhancing all opportunities and creating a		Ongoing development has included enhancing support for Information Management and prevention of data



central fulfilment centre within - March 2024.		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 in line with the transformation objectives for the department
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/NCSC and external audit – 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 Q2	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. As within the body of text
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 Q2	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		Most preparatory work has been completed. The onboarding of a Security Operations Centre will be the priority for Q2 and Q3

the authority's user base - March 2024.		
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 with the recently introduced MFA and background security measures.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 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%	90%			The Service Desk continues to be challenging with a reduced staffing due to vacancy and sickness however there are plans (integrated with the Customer Journey project and M365 delivery) to automate 'self-help' process

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				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				The level of foot fall into the Shops continues to rise, with seasonal and service dependant increases as the financial strain upon residents increases.

[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 Q2	Supporting Commentary
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Review constitution - May 2023.		The revised Constitution was approved at Annual Council
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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 Q2	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	Q2 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 have been offered a MAP. Take up is a matter of personal choice.
LD LI 02	Percentage of Members attending at least one organised	52 98%	54 100%	30 55.6%			Reasonable progress has been made, but as always attendance is a


	Training Event.						matter of personal choice for Members.
LD LI 03	Average Time taken to issue prosecutions from receipt of full instructions (working days).	10 (Days)	10 (Days)	10 (Days)			In two cases, there was a delay in reviewing files due to pressures of other work. The client department was kept aware and prosecutions were issued in a timely manner after receipt of full instructions.
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)			The target has been met.
LD LI 05	% of Executive Board minutes published within 5 working days after the meeting.	100%	100%	100%			The target has been met.

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 Q2	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 Q2	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	Q2 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%	98.39%			Where the service has not met the required 90% KPI, this is due to GPs signing death certificates on day 4 or later. 99.40% customers seen early 9or on time within 10 minutes of appointment time.
CE LI 12	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Primary Schools.		75%	73.1%			This figure will be revised after October Census to get a more accurate number of pupils on FSM.
CE LI 13	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Secondary Schools.		60%	65.6%			This figure will be revised after October Census to get a more accurate number of pupils on FSM.
CE LI 14	Take up of school lunches (%) – primary schools.		60%	54.6%			This figure will be revised after October Census to get a more accurate number of pupils on roll.
CE LI 15	Take up of school lunches (%) – secondary schools.		50%	52.31%			This figure will be revised after October Census to get a more accurate number of pupils on roll.
CE LI 16	Room Occupancy –	12.34%	40%	31.8%			New KPI for monitoring occupancy rates. Note the summer




	Meetings (Box Level)						months is historically down in line with school holidays. This rate is expected to rise from September.
CE LI 17	Room Occupancy – Conferences (Bridge & Karalius)	50.19%	60%	53.9%		 	New KPI for monitoring occupancy rates. Note the summer months is historically down in line with school holidays. This rate is expected to rise from September.

Property Services


Key Objectives / milestones

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



Milestone	Progress Q2	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 currently 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 .		Works at both St Patricks and St Luke's have been delayed as a result of the decarbonisation bids that are to be submitted in October. Once the outcome of same is know the projects will be able to progress
Ensure all the projects are progressed in line with the school maintenance programme and are delivered by 31st March 2024 .		The majority of projects are now complete with only 3 outstanding all of which are 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		All projects for corporate buildings are progressing, and the budget will

programme and are delivered by 31st March 2024.		be fully expended 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 10 th 2023. There will be 2 separate bids, one covering the care homes and the other covering, Runcorn Town Hall, Kingsway Learning Centre and Picow Farm Depot.
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, various events took place over the summer to help increase the footfall.
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 Q2	Supporting Commentary
All EDRs to be completed by September 23		All departmental EDRs completed

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 Q2	Supporting Commentary
Scheme in Place September 2023		Scheme fully designed with commissioning commenced and now called the Business Support Service
Scheme finalised March 2025		On track for March 2025 completion

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 Q2	Supporting Commentary
Funding Secured Q3 2023 / 2024		The Joint Venture have agreed terms with The Chrysalis Fund and discussions are ongoing with the CA to secure Investment Zone funding.
Procurement Q4 2023 / 2024		The project is being tendered using the Procure Partnerships Framework. Initial phase was completed this quarter and the tender will be put to market in Q3.
Groundbreaking Q1 2024 2025		Currently on target for a start on site in 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 September 2023

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	6,453	3,030	3,011	19	48
Insurances	910	800	921	(121)	(184)
Supplies & Services	364	250	296	(46)	(94)
Rent Allowances	35,500	14,686	14,686	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,748	600	569	31	68
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	23	23	0	0
Discretionary Social Fund	310	10	5	5	7
Discretionary Housing Payments	300	108	108	0	0
Household Support Fund Expenditure	654	653	653	0	0
Energy Bills Support	41	41	41	0	0
LCR Levy	2,241	1,121	1,121	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	17	0	0	0	17
Bad Debt Provision	77	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	48,685	21,322	21,434	(112)	(138)
Income					
Other Fees & Charges	-344	-195	-188	(7)	(10)
Burdens Grant	-60	-60	-88	28	28
Dedicated schools Grant	-123	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Liability Order	-541	-474	-475	1	3
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	0
Schools SLAs	-295	-295	-301	6	6
LCR Reimbursement	-2,241	-1,121	-1,121	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-400	-67	-67	0	0
Rent Allowances	-34,800	-13,865	-13,623	(242)	(363)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-35	-49	14	25
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-300	-93	-93	0	0
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-515	-268	-276	8	17
Universal Credits	-5	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Admin Grant	-204	0	0	0	0
Household Support Fund Grant	-654	-52	-52	0	0
Energy Bills Support	-245	-245	-245	0	0
Alternative Fuel	-57	-57	-57	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-121	121	184
Reimbursements & Other Grants	-159	-110	-110	0	0
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-82	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-41,252	-16,937	-16,866	(71)	(110)
Net Operational Expenditure	7,433	4,385	4,568	(183)	(248)
Recharges					
Premises Support	268	134	134	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,069	1,034	1,034	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,330	-2,665	-2,665	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,993	-1,497	-1,497	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	4,440	2,888	3,071	(183)	(248)

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of September 2023 the department is reporting a forecasted overspend of £0.183m, it is expected net spend for the year will be over the approved budget by £0.248m

Staffing forecasts for the year include an estimated amount for the 2023/24 pay award which will be higher than the 4% increase included in the 2023/24 budget.

Despite this it is expected staffing costs to be lower than budget due to vacancies and some spend being reallocated against external grant where possible.

Rent allowances 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. The impact of this can be seen from the £0.363m forecasted overspend by the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

The insurance budget is also under significant pressure, new contracts are out for tender and there has been an increase in costs across all policy premiums, resulting in an estimated overspend of £0.184m in the current financial year. The additional cost of this will be funded from the insurance reserve.

The most notable area of underspend against budget is concessionary travel, where net spend will be approximately £0.068m lower than budget at financial year-end., down from the forecast in quarter 1. Concessionary travel has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic as 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.







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
APPENDIX A**

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Implemented in April 2023 and income budget increased accordingly
F6	Income Control	118	Removal of payment kiosks which are now significantly under-utilised and in need of replacement. The ceasing of annual rental and licence costs will provide a saving. Residents can instead make payments for council tax etc. via the numerous Paypoint outlets across the Borough.	20	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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	135	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Implemented April 2023 and expenditure budgets reduced accordingly

			policies providing cover for exceptional or potentially high cost claims.					
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	150	0	0		On Target

			<p>following Covid, it is considered that the budget for concessionary travel costs can be reduced. The budget was underspent by £421k (20%) in 2021/22. A reduction in this budget will not prevent any eligible concessionary passenger from still being able to travel.</p>					
F17	Council Tax	84	<p>Increase the charges applied when a court summons is issued by 30% (£23), to achieve full cost recovery over the three year period.</p>	40	40	40		<p>On target, summons cost increased for 2023/24</p>
F17 Cont	Council Tax	N/A	<p>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</p>	116	0	0		<p>Post appointed to and review of exemptions to commence over the next quarter.</p>

			the cost of the new post.					
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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Interest payable on target to achieve increased target.
Total Finance Department				893	65	90		

Chief Executive's Delivery Unit

Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2023

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	2,795	1,297	1,196	101	53
Employees Training	117	58	44	14	5
Apprenticeship Levy	300	150	162	(12)	(50)
Supplies & Services	303	100	47	53	81
Total Expenditure	3,515	1,605	1,449	156	89
Income					
Fees & Charges	-211	-120	-104	(16)	(31)
Schools SLA	-533	-533	-532	(1)	(1)
Total Income	-744	-653	-636	(17)	(32)
Net Operational Expenditure	2,771	952	813	139	57
Recharges					
Premises Support	117	59	59	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,023	512	512	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,491	-2,746	-2,746	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,298	-2,175	-2,175	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-1,527	-1,223	-1,362	139	57

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. In Q1 the net spend outturn performance was forecast at £0.042m under budget, there has been a marginal increase to this forecast as the forecast outturn is now estimating net spend to be £0.057 below the approved budget.

Despite employee spend being £0.101m below budget due to vacancies, there are restructures in place to change the current model, which will help identify and tackle the issues the Council is facing with rising agency costs. The apprenticeship levy overspend against budget has been reduced to reflect the spend across the initial 6 months of the financial year.

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	2,500	998	4,002
Total Capital	5,000	2,500	998	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

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		
PPPE 1	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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Reflected within the 2022/23 budget.
PPPE 4	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	<input type="checkbox"/>	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 and Administration Department

Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2023

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employee Expenditure	8,126	3,800	3,965	(165)	(320)
Supplies & Services Expenditure	1,012	660	675	(15)	(29)
Capital Finance	78	25	12	13	27
Computer Repairs & Software	1,333	1,050	1,124	(74)	(85)
Communication Costs	13	6	38	(32)	(41)
Premises Expenditure	175	119	116	3	9
Transport Expenditure	3	1	1	0	1
Total Expenditure	10,740	5,661	5,931	(270)	(438)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-996	-50	-85	35	168
Schools SLA Income	-610	-600	-605	5	10
Total Income	-1,606	-650	-690	40	178
Net Operational Expenditure	9,134	5,011	5,241	(230)	(260)
Recharges					
Premises Support	557	279	279	0	0
Transport	16	8	8	0	0
Central Support	1,797	899	899	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-10,951	-5,477	-5,477	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-7,087	-4,291	-4,291	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,047	720	950	(230)	(260)

Comments on the above figures

At the end of September 2023 the department is expected to exceed the annual approved budget by £0.260m. A marginally increased forecasted overspend from the original position in Q1 (£0.199m). This is due to additional security costs over a 3 year period moving from the capital fund into the revenue stream.

Employee costs for the year are expected to exceed the budget position by approximately £0.320m. This is based on increased employee costs from the proposed 2023/24 pay deal plus staff turnover saving targets not currently being achieved. In the 2024/25 financial year the Administration Staff will be disaggregated, and their respective budgets will move to the service areas, however for the current financial year, the budgets will remain in the ICT and Administration Department for reporting purposes.

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. There is also marginally higher MFD usage within schools which has offset lower than budgeted SLA uptake, with the shift to academies and increased fees this is likely to continue to worsen. With a number of agency staff across the Council, the department is continuing to recharge 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 September 2023

	Annual Capital Allocation	Allocation to Date	Actual Spend	Total Allocation Remaining
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure				
ICT Rolling Capital Project	700	350	184	516
Total Capital	700	350	184	651

Comments on the above figures

The ICT and Admin Department has a rolling budget of £0.700m for capital needs each year. The capital allocation will be reduced by £0.218m to fund a new laptop contract with Dell. The new hardware will be able to function without the use of VDI, meaning all Council staff utilising laptops should see an increase in performance allowing them to carry out their work more efficiently. In recent years there has been a shift into user-based subscription costs for Microsoft Office and other software licences, meaning that the IT department in future years will be less reliant on the capital allocation and there will be a significant strain on the revenue funds.

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 and Democratic Services Department

Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2023

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	1,436	755	703	52	76
Agency Costs (Locums)	0	0	375	(375)	(575)
Supplies & Services	164	130	131	(1)	(5)
Civic Catering & Functions	26	13	2	11	3
Legal Expenses	218	100	166	(66)	(207)
Transport Related Expenditure	11	6	0	6	3
Total Expenditure	1,855	1,004	1,377	(373)	(705)
Income					
School SLA's	-92	-92	-78	(14)	(14)
Licence Income	-284	-142	-121	(21)	12
Reimbursement & Other Grants	0	0	0	0	25
Fees & Charges Income	-70	-34	-33	(1)	(1)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-393	393	593
Total Income	-446	-268	-625	357	615
Net Operational Expenditure	1,409	736	752	(16)	(90)
Recharges					
Premises Support	58	29	29	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	282	141	141	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	340	170	170	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,749	906	922	(16)	(90)

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of September 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 £0.090m at the end of the financial year. This is slightly improved position from the end of Q1 where the forecasted net spend outturn was £0.099m over budget.

Employee costs for the year are still 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.

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 £0.575m at the end of the financial year. This figure has increased due to additional staffing resources required for Children's Care Orders and clearing a backlog of cases. Whilst it has been agreed that these costs will be funded from reserves it is important that the Council takes action to begin to reduce reliance on agency usage.

Within the forecast £0.207m overspend against budget of legal expenses, there is an estimated £0.233m 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 September 2023

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,085	7,607	7,428	179	358
Premises	3,685	1,483	1,479	4	8
Supplies & Services	1,598	837	882	(45)	(90)
Hired & Contracted Services	607	231	286	(55)	(111)
Book Fund	140	86	86	0	0
Food Provisions	371	117	181	(64)	(127)
School Meals Food	1,965	841	858	(17)	(32)
Miscellaneous Transport Costs	117	55	68	(13)	(26)
Other Agency Costs	601	182	209	(27)	(53)
Other Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Waste Disposal Contracts	6,885	106	57	49	98
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	67	18	14	4	8
Grant to Norton Priory	172	86	87	(1)	(1)
Capital Financing	201	41	0	41	83
Total Expenditure	33,494	11,690	11,635	55	115
Income					
Sales Income	-3,962	-1,950	-1,402	(548)	(1,095)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,752	-3,488	-3,614	126	251
Rental Income	-221	-98	-108	10	19
Government Grant Income	-695	-646	-774	128	256
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-665	-383	-389	6	12
SLA Income	-2,391	-2,260	-2,139	(121)	(242)
Internal Fees Income	-592	-96	-176	80	161
Capital Salaries	-173	-46	-46	0	0
Transfers From Reserves	0	51	51	0	0
Total Income	-14,451	-8,916	-8,597	(319)	(638)
Net Operational Expenditure	19,043	2,774	3,038	(264)	(523)
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,825	913	913	0	0
Transport	2,046	1,027	1,047	(20)	(41)
Central Support	3,856	1,933	1,933	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-540	-274	-274	0	0
Net Total Recharges	7,386	3,599	3,619	(20)	(41)
Net Departmental Expenditure	26,429	6,373	6,657	(284)	(564)

Comments on the above figures

Financial Position

The net department spend is £0.284m over budget at the end of Quarter 2 and the estimated outturn overspend against budget for 2023/24 is £0.564m.

Net employee spend is estimated to be under the approved budget at the end of the financial year. The forecast outturn includes the pay increase proposal of £1,925 for all grades (a 3.5% increase for DM and above scales has already been agreed). Whilst the proposed pay deal is over what had been included within the budget this is mitigated by the number of vacancies within leisure services and reduced casual usage in line with 2022/23 actual data.

Food Provisions is overspent due to the increasing inflationary food costs from suppliers.

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 at the Stadium, school meal sales plus a reduction in room hire at Community Centres and Libraries are forecast to contribute towards lower income levels.

Additional grant Income has been received from Sport England under the Swimming Pool Support Fund initiative to ensure the continued provision of leisure centres in the Borough.

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

Trade Waste fee charges are expected to overachieve with the increased uptake of green waste collections.

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 September 2023

Project Title	2023/24 Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Stadium Minor Works	34	17	18	16
Brookvale Pitch Refurbishment	28	14	13	15
Halton Leisure Centre	15,056	7,528	8,014	7,042
Open Spaces Schemes	851	426	137	714
Children's Playground Equipment	105	53	15	90
Upton Improvements	13	0	0	13
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12	2	1	11
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340	30	0	340
Runcorn Town Park	284	142	106	178
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,023	512	20	1,003
Pickerings Pasture Café	520	250	0	520
Litter Bins	20	5	0	20
Totals	18,286	8,978	8,324	9,962

Comments on the above figures

Halton (Moor Lane) Leisure Centre

The project is making good progress and on track. Total project cost has increased slightly due to increase in provisional sum items. Totals costings for the project are continually being reviewed.

Open Spaces

This covers spending on a variety of externally funded projects: Birchfield Gardens refurbishment, Upton Rocks access works, The Big Halton Forest, and some small minor works contracts. Spending is behind target due to capacity issues.

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 capacity issues.

Crow Wood Park

The main contract is now completed, outstanding balance will cover final and retention payments.

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 was slightly behind due to staff capacity issues. However, a consultancy is in place and have begun site investigation works ahead of finalising designs/contract documentation for tender.

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. Replace all non-LED lighting in the building. This is estimated to reduce on-stage energy costs by 75%.	10 10	0 0	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.
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. An organisational restructure is currently being implemented for Stadium & Catering Services to reflect recent service changes.	50 40	0 0	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	0	0	12		Work underway in school meals being delivered through alternative means

Ref.	Service	Net	Description of Saving	Savings Value			Current	Comments
			them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.					
Total Community & Environment Department				230	-84	12		

ECONOMY ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

Revenue Operational Budget at 30 September 2023

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,311	2,666	2,633	33	65
Repairs & Maintenance	1,940	983	990	(7)	(11)
Premises	122	110	116	(6)	(10)
Energy & Water Costs	1,768	680	570	110	207
NNDR	793	684	645	39	39
Rents	170	127	128	(1)	(1)
Economic Regeneration Activities	37	3	3	0	0
Security	509	187	202	(15)	(30)
Supplies & Services	356	183	190	(7)	(14)
Supplies & Services - Grant	962	262	262	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	105	53	53	0	0
Capital Finance	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	38	38	38	0	0
Total Expenditure	12,111	5,976	5,830	146	245
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-840	-409	-449	40	81
Rent - Commercial Properties	-906	-356	-334	(22)	(43)
Rent - Investment Properties	-44	-22	-20	(2)	(5)
Rent - Markets	-852	-429	-406	(23)	(46)
Government Grant	-1,229	-318	-318	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-990	-413	-416	3	6
Schools SLA Income	-300	-284	-235	(49)	(49)
Recharges to Capital	-251	-63	-70	7	14
Transfer from Reserves	0	-732	-732	0	1
Total Income	-5,412	-3,026	-2,980	(46)	(41)
Net Operational Expenditure	6,699	2,950	2,850	100	204
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,006	1,003	1,003	0	0
Transport	23	12	12	0	0
Central Support	1,710	856	856	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-7,728	-3,864	-3,864	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,985	-1,993	-1,993	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,714	957	857	100	204

Comments on the above figures

Budget monitoring is undertaken on a monthly basis with budget holders to ensure that unapproved overspends are avoided, developing action plans to achieve efficiencies and address areas of budget pressure.

Finance works closely with the department to manage and analyse underspending to identify potential savings that could help meet current and future years' priorities.

Comparison to Previous Quarter

Economy, Enterprise & Property outturn has improved from a forecasted outturn of £0.125m over budget to £0.204m under budget at the end of the financial year with a current figure of net spend being £0.100m under budget for the second quarter of the year. A positive variance of £0.329m.

Supporting Information

The Department consists of 154fte of which 66fte are core funded, with a staff turnover savings target of £0.134m. 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 £0.065m at financial year-end.

By carefully monitoring the accounts, the department has utilised grant/external funding where possible to try and relieve the pressure on the core Council budget. This is reflected in employee expenses this quarter where various projects have been identified and staff time has been charged accordingly. This process will continue throughout the year. As in Quarter 1 it is important to note that forecasts include an allowance for the 2023/24 pay award.

As inflation is running much higher than originally predicted at the time of budget setting, the department will be expected to absorb any price increases that may arise from within the budget allocations made. This is proving difficult for repairs and maintenance due to the continued increase in the price of materials. The Repairs and Maintenance programme is constantly under review to keep within budget.

However, there is a risk that unexpected events may occur which require expenditure to be incurred, that has not been allocated for.

The Asset Management Service has incurred one off expense this year, due to the vacant unit at The Hive, that was previously occupied by Frankie & Benny's. Costs relating to NNDR, Repairs and Maintenance and Service Charges have had to be paid by HBC until the unit is leased.

Due to the energy costs budget increasing significantly in 2023/24, the department is forecasting that it will be £0.207m under budget in year as costs have not risen as much as expected, but costs are still predicted to be £0.502m higher than 2022/23, which is an increase of over 50%. The forecast will change over the following two quarters depending on the change in energy usage over this time.

This financial year has witnessed an increase in the security costs. This is due not only to inflation, but the need for additional security in Halton Lea, due to anti-social behaviour. The need for security at all locations is reviewed on a regular basis and if necessary, advice is provided from the Police.

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, though the second quarter of the year has seen an increase in the amount of commercial property income. This is due to Agency Staff within Asset Management being able to focus predominantly on the rent reviews and licence fees.

There is also a focus within the team to fill the vacant properties within the portfolio. The current projection is that the income target will not be achieved by £0.046m. This is a £0.144 lower than the figure projected in Quarter 1.

Due to adverse trading conditions in the retail sector which have been made worse due to inflation and increased utilities costs, the department is projecting to under achieve on market rental income targets this budget year. The occupancy rate is approximately 89%.

The School Cleaning Service Level Agreement (SLA) is not covering its costs this budget year due to the need to employ agency staff to cover sickness and leave and the pay award. A review of SLA charges has been undertaken ahead of the next budget year. The demand for the service is also decreasing as schools move to Academies.

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 of 30 September 23

	Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Expenditure				
3MG	151	12	12	139
Murdishaw	30	0	0	30
Equality Act Improvement Works	282	84	84	198
Kingsway Learning Centre Improved Facilities	36	0	0	36
Halton Lea TCF Roof Top Garden	35	0	0	35
Property Improvements	223	23	23	200
Waterloo Building Runcorn	93	0	0	93
Woodend - Former Unit 10 Catalyst Trade Park	200	161	161	39
Foundry Lane Residential Area	2634	1303	1303	1331
Police Station Demolition	406	0	0	406
Runcorn Station Building Development	515	30	30	485
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	17	0	0	17
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	291	0	0	291
Changing Places	212	52	52	160
Town Deal	2,740	585	586	2154
Total Capital	7,865	2,250	2,251	5,614

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- It is anticipated that the equality act budget will be fully spent by year end as the department have a number of projects that are currently on site or have yet to start which should be complete by year end.

Kingsway Learning Centre - There are plans for a PA system to be installed in October.

Property Improvements- It is anticipated that the Property Improvement budget will be fully spend by year end, the department have a number of projects which have been allocated to that budget, some of which are on site some of which have yet to commence on site nevertheless they will be complete by year end.

Waterloo Centre - Approval has now been obtained to demolish the building, as such works will commence prior to Christmas with the demolition. Final costings will be known during quarter 3.

Woodend - All works are complete except for the installation of the new gas supply which has been ordered and will hopefully be done prior to Christmas. The cost of the gas supply is circa £40k.

Foundry Lane – Project progressing on schedule with all ground remediation works now complete. Slight underspend against projected expenditure at 2022/23 year-end due to remediation works delays incurred during Q2 and Q3. Expenditure will fall back into line in 2023.

Police Station Demolition – Legal are in the process of finalising the overage payment for Cheshire Police

Runcorn Station Building Development –A detailed delivery programme up to Approval In Principal stage has been produced and is 3 weeks ahead of schedule. A sponsor’s instruction has also been sent to partners to be signed off.

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.







Runcorn Waterfront Development - Preparation work is currently ongoing in respect of getting all the tender documentation ready to go through a procurement exercise in respect of the demolition of both Belvedere and Churchill Hall. It is hoped that the tender documents will be issued via the Chest in November with a realistic start on site not being until the New Year.


Changing Places - The changing places facility at the Stadium is now complete and operational. Works are progressing well on site at Victoria Park with completion due in late October. Works have also started on site at Halton Lea Library, completion being due by the end of November.

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	A review and restructuring of caretaking arrangements.	0	52	0		Restructure will take place in 24/25. It is anticipated the full saving will not be met in year. 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.
			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.	35	0	0		
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 unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken</u>.</i>

Direction of Travel Indicator

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